

2016

## K-12 Transition Framework for Students with Disabilities

Clydia Delaney  
*University of Central Florida*

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Doctoral Dissertation (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

### STARS Citation

Delaney, Clydia, "K-12 Transition Framework for Students with Disabilities" (2016). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019*. 5039.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/5039>

**K-12 TRANSITION FRAMEWORK  
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

by

CLYDIA JENEE' EDDINS DELANEY  
B.A. University of West Florida, 1990  
M.S. Florida State University, 2002

A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the College of Education and Human Performance  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term  
2016

Major Professor: Carolyn Walker Hopp

©2016 Clydia Jenee' Eddins Delaney

## **ABSTRACT**

The problem of practice that this dissertation addressed was the post-secondary transition of students with disabilities, which has garnered national and international attention for decades. This dissertation was completed to inform the educational community regarding the potential for improvement in the post-secondary transition process of students with disabilities. Multiple factors were examined related to helping students with disabilities develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments.

A pilot study was conducted to inform a potential transition framework. Invitations to participate in an anonymous survey were sent to 741 teachers in the district via email. The survey, conducted in a small North Florida School District, had 289 nine participants, but not all participants were targeted to respond to every question. In addition to the quantitative items, the survey included several open response questions, which were coded and themed to inform the framework and specific concerns of the Director of Exceptional Student Services.

The data from the pilot study were used to develop the K – 12 Transition Framework, which included levels of knowledge development from kindergarten through high school. Introducing students with disabilities to post-secondary transition concepts in the elementary grades supports the construction of a prior knowledge base at the elementary grade level. The prior knowledge base will be enhanced potential knowledge growth regarding opportunities, education and careers. This will translate into the successful transition of students with disabilities into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments.



This work is dedicated to my family

To my loving mother, Julia Kate Boutwell Eddins, March 14, 1930 – September 27, 2012

(You taught me the value of common sense, loved me and believed in me)

I hope you are smiling in heaven

To James Bishop DeLaney, the wind beneath the wings of all the people he meets

(You were patient, you encouraged me, and **ALL** the miles you drove can never be calculated)

Thank you for being my friend

To my children, David, Pamela, Ryan, and Julia

(You listened, read, edited, encouraged, and were understanding beyond belief)

Thank you, I love each of you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge all of the instructors I have had the pleasure of learning with at the University of Central Florida, while working in this program.

Further, I would like to acknowledge colleagues Terry Huddleston, Keith Hatcher, Lynn Jamison, Beth Bullard, Sara Bucchi, Judith Roberts, Dr. Carla Keenum, and Keith Couey. Each of you has supported me in your own way during this pursuit. For this I thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Mary Little, Dr. Maria Reyes, and Dr. Shelby Robertson. Words cannot express how much I appreciate all of you, your time, and your guidance. Thank you seems so inadequate for the ways in you have all helped me.

Finally, I want to specifically acknowledge Dr. Carolynn Walker Hop, my Major Professor and Committee Chair. In my lifetime, I have had the honor of meeting a few distinguished ladies for whom I hold deep respect. You are one of them. You are the quintessential role model for women in today's world. Your passion for life is extraordinary. The way you stand strong, smile, and give to others no matter what you are dealing with is amazing. Your wisdom is deep. You have encouraged me helped me grow both personally and professionally. Your guidance is gentle but strong, and has been invaluable in this pursuit.

With my deepest respect, thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
LIST OF TABLES .....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: THE PROPOSAL .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Problem of Practice .....	4
Significance of the Problem .....	4
Exploratory Research Question .....	7
Organizational Context .....	7
Exceptional Student Education .....	10
My Professional Role(s) .....	10
Positionality .....	11
History and Conceptualization .....	13
International Information on Transition .....	13
National Information on Transition .....	14
Local Efforts towards Transition .....	23
District Pilot Program .....	25
Factors that Impact the Problem .....	25
Dissertation Plan .....	29
The Proposed Framework .....	29
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) .....	29
Flexibility of Representation .....	30
Flexibility of Expression .....	31

Flexibility of Engagement.....	31
District Support.....	32
Summary of the Proposed Framework .....	33
Action Plan.....	33
CHAPTER 2: THE PILOT STUDY .....	36
The Problem of Practice.....	36
Design Need.....	36
The Significance of the Design.....	41
Potential Benefits to the Problem of Practice .....	41
Similar Context .....	42
Elements of the Preliminary Design .....	44
Pilot Survey.....	49
Data Collection .....	51
Survey Design.....	51
Sample Methods .....	53
Response Rate.....	55
Survey Results .....	61
Information for the Director of Exceptional Student Education .....	61
Comparing Perceptions in the Target District to Previous Findings in the Literature .....	87
Data to Inform the Finalization of the K-12 Transition Framework.....	89
The Intended Interviews .....	102
Summary of Findings from the Pilot Study .....	103

CHAPTER 3: THE DESIGN.....	107
The Problem of Practice.....	107
The Proposal .....	107
Collaboration.....	108
Design Significance .....	108
Resolving the Problem of Practice.....	109
The Context.....	110
Goals .....	112
Subordinate Goals include:.....	113
Key Elements of the Design .....	113
Theories, Concepts and Practices .....	114
Need for the Design .....	117
Methods for Determining how Goals will be Met .....	119
The Pilot Study .....	121
Informing the Framework.....	122
Data Supporting the Need for the Framework.....	123
The Framework.....	126
Domain 4, High School .....	127
Data for Domain 4 High School.....	127
Skill Sets for Domain 4 .....	127
Domain 3, Middle School Grades.....	129
Data for Domain 3.....	129

Skill Sets for Domain 3 .....	130
Domain 2, Intermediate Grades .....	132
Data for Domain 2 .....	132
Skill Sets for Domain 2 .....	133
Domain 1, Primary Grades .....	135
Data for Domain 1 .....	135
Skill Sets for Domain 1 .....	135
The Final Design .....	137
Domain 4 .....	137
Domain 3 .....	138
Domain 2 .....	138
Domain 1 .....	138
CHAPTER 4: K-12 TRANSITION FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS .....	140
The Problem of Practice .....	140
Summary of the K -12 Transition Framework .....	140
Expected Results .....	141
Target Audience .....	143
Anticipated Changes .....	144
Indicators of Achieved Goals .....	145
Anticipated Impact .....	146
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND PROGRAM IMPACT .....	148
Implications of This Framework .....	148
Modifications Made to the Preliminary Framework Design .....	149
Recommendations for Future Research .....	150

Impact of the Dissertation in Practice Program .....	150
Integration of Course Work .....	152
Fall Semester of 2013.....	152
Spring Semester 2014 .....	153
Summer Semester 2014.....	154
Fall Semester 2014.....	155
Spring Semester 2015 .....	156
Summer Semester of 2015 .....	157
Fall Semester 2015.....	157
Dissertation Hours .....	157
APPENDIX A: IRB SUBMISSION.....	159
APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH.....	192
APPENDIX C: LEA DOCUMENT.....	194
APPENDIX D: TARGET DISTRICT TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN .....	206
APPENDIX E: TRANSITION SURVEY .....	208
REFERENCES .....	228

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1 District Administrative Organizational Chart.....	9
Figure 1-2 Positionality of Research .....	12
Figure 1-3 Percentage of students who graduated in 2012 comparison .....	28
Figure 1-4 Visual depiction of the disparity of 2012 graduation rate comparison .....	28
Figure 1-5 Preliminary Framework Design .....	35
Figure 2-1 Target District LEA Data compared to state goals for Indicators 1, 13, 14A, 14B, and 14C .....	40
Figure 2-2 Post-Secondary Paths .....	44
Figure 2-3 Student Competencies in the 12th Grade .....	45
Figure 2-4 Student Competencies in the 9th ~ 11th Grades .....	46
Figure 2-5 Potential student Competencies in the Middle Grades .....	47
Figure 2-6 Student Competencies in the Intermediate Grades .....	48
Figure 2-7 Participants Classification.....	56
Figure 2-8 Participants Designation.....	58
Figure 2-9 Participants current school assignment .....	60
Figure 2-10 Previous trainings .....	64
Figure 2-11 Teacher Requested Trainings .....	66
Figure 2-12 Teacher responses regarding time being allocated to teach transition skills .....	87
Figure 2-13 Teacher responses regarding having enough time to teach transition skills .....	88
Figure 2-14 Responses to “Are you teaching transition skills to students with disabilities?” .....	89
Figure 2-15 Graph of veteran teacher responses Primary Grade Span .....	92
Figure 2-16 Graph of veteran teacher responses Intermediate Grade Span .....	95
Figure 2-17 Graph of veteran teacher responses Middle School Grade Span.....	98
Figure 2-18 Graph of veteran teacher responses High School Grade Span.....	101
Figure 2-19 Teachers willing to participate in an interview .....	102
Figure 3-1 Domain 4 High School Grade Span .....	128



Figure 3-2 Domain 3 Middle School Grade Span .....	131
Figure 3-3 Domain 2 Intermediate Grades .....	134
Figure 3-4 Domain 1 Primary Grades.....	136
Figure 3-5 The K – 12 Transition Framework Designed by Jenee’ DeLaney 2016 .....	139

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 Previous Trainings .....	62
Table 2-2 Teacher responses regarding what would help implement teaching transition skills, coded and themed	68
Table 2-3 Teacher responses regarding barriers that hinder the transition process coded and themed .....	72
Table 2-4 Teacher responses regarding curricular supports .....	77
Table 2-5 Teacher suggestions for improving the transition process .....	82
Table 2-6 Veteran teacher responses Primary Grade Span .....	91
Table 2-7 Veteran teacher responses Intermediate Grade Span .....	94
Table 2-8 Veteran teacher responses Middle School Grade Span .....	97
Table 2-9 Veteran teacher responses High School Grade Span .....	100

# CHAPTER 1: THE PROPOSAL

## Introduction

The process of moving from one place, level, or status to another is called transition (Dictionary, retrieved June, 7, 2015). In education, students face many transitions. When they first enter school, they are transitioning from their home or daycare to a school setting. Pre-K prepares them for kindergarten. Kindergarten prepares them for primary grades of elementary school. Elementary school prepares them for the secondary components of their education, and these components should prepare students for postsecondary transition.

Postsecondary transition is a time of transubstantiation educationally, geographically, biologically and emotionally (Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009). During postsecondary transition, students move from the familiar and preparatory climate of high school to what can be unfamiliar adult surroundings. Students with disabilities (SWD) face situations and choices that have adult consequences. For some SWD, this period will be their first endeavor without the guidance of a trusted teacher or sponsor or the safety net of their IEP. Some students with disabilities face the additional challenge of moving from a single contact point for services, which prior to had been provided through the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services by the school system, to extraneous service providers (Baer, McMahan, & Flexer, 2004; Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009; Flexer, Baer, Luft, & Simmons, T., 2012). Sometimes, students must navigate multiple adult service providers (Baer, McMahan, & Flexer, 2004; Flexer, Baer, Luft, & Simmons, T., 2012).

This dissertation in practice will investigate factors related to the transition of students with disabilities (SWD) from the K-12 school environment to adult life in a small north Florida

county. This action research will inform the body of knowledge regarding the transition of students with disabilities to various postsecondary settings. Additionally, this research will develop suggestions for the Director of Exceptional Student Education, as to what the school district can do to improve the transition of students with disabilities in a small north Florida county from high school to successful and productive adult lives. By improving transition prospects for this population, the research will also serve to improve the graduation rate for students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002).

If not served effectively, students with disabilities are at risk for dropping out of school and not transitioning into productive adult lives (Newman, Wagner, Huang, Shaver, Knokey, Yu, & Cameto 2011). Additionally, the potential for their successful post-secondary placements are greatly reduced (Newman, et. al., 2011). The ramifications to individual students include reduced chances of higher education, reduced employment opportunities, reduced independent living opportunities, lower standards of living, dependence on public assistance, increased chances of law enforcement involvement, and lower self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). Societal ramifications associated with this complex problem include the cost of public assistance, increased need for law enforcement, the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior, cost of incarceration and reduced income tax revenue due to lower or nonexistent salaries from people who could have become productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008),

This is not a new concern for society. Documentation of funding requests to battle delinquent behavior can be found dating back to the mid 1930's (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.). In 1936 the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover, appeared before a senate appropriations hearing, advocating for additional funding

(Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.). His elite FBI special agents, the “G” Men, had been fighting the crime wave of the early 1930’s. Fighting crime was expensive and the infamous criminals of the day had an obvious commonality. Many of them had dropped out of school. John Dillinger dropped out of school at the age of 16. Bonnie (15) and Clyde (16) were both high school dropouts. John Paul Chase dropped out of elementary school in the 5th grade and Baby Face Nelson dropped out of school at the age of twelve (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.).

There is a plethora of research delineating the relationship between students with disabilities, not completing high school, and maladaptive behavior which can lead to involvement with the criminal justice system (Burke, 2009; Keith, & Mccray, 2002; Kumagami, & Kumagai, 2014; Mallett, 2011; Morris, & Morris, 2006; Neil, 2010; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirier, 2005; Rucklidge, McLean, & Bateup, 2013; Rutherford, Bullis, Anderson, & Griller-Clark, 2002; Selenius, Hellström, & Belfrage, 2011; Seo, Abbott, & Hawkins, 2008; Whitaker, 2011; & White, & Loeber, 2008). Selenius, Hellström, and Belfrage in their 2011 study express that the existent of mild disabilities is not a causal relationship for criminal behavior; however, it may intensify aggressive behavior.

A 2005 study indicated over 134,000 young people were incarcerated in the United States, and a significant majority of these young people were deemed marginally literate or below (Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher & Poirier, 2005). At this writing, information on the Florida Department of Corrections website confirms the “at-risk” status of students with disabilities in reporting that over 50% of adjudicated youth have learning disabilities and/or behavioral disorders (Department of Corrections, July 2010B). Additionally, As of June 30, 2010 only 12.9% of the Inmate Population in the State of Florida tested at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level on

the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) (Department of Corrections, July 2010A), and the median grade level of achievement by inmates in the state of Florida was upper sixth grade (Department of Corrections, July 2010A).

There have been allegations that planners use third grade reading benchmark scores to predict the number of prison beds needed at a future date. This writer was unable to validate said claim through peer-reviewed literature. However, documentation through the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicated that 41 percent of adult inmates incarcerated had not completed high school or attained a GED (Harlow, 2003).

### **Problem of Practice**

Sixty nine percent of students with disabilities in a small north Florida school district failed to complete high school and transition into productive post-secondary experiences. Therefore, the problem of practice this Dissertation in Practice will address is the lack of a consistent transition continuum for students with disabilities to develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye, *Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart*, 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

### **Significance of the Problem**

The objective of education is to prepare young people for success in life after school. The lack of a formal centralized plan or framework to help students with disabilities transition through school and into successful, post-secondary activities and environments equates to educational negligence (Johnson, 2009). It puts students with disabilities at risk for dropping out of school, and reduces their chance of success in post-secondary endeavors (Newman, et. al.,

2011). Potential consequences to the students include reduced employment opportunities, reduced independent living opportunities, reduced chances of higher education, the potential of a lower standard of living, increased chances of law enforcement involvement, and lower self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). Potential cost to society includes the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior such as an increased need for law enforcement and the cost of incarceration and reduced income tax revenue due to lower or nonexistent salaries from people who could have become productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008),

Currently, in the target district, there is no centralized plan for the transition of students with disabilities integrated into the Exceptional Student Education program. The district does have a Third party Cooperative Agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to provide job-coaching services to students who have been VR approved. However, these services have been limited primarily to one high school and only provided services to 11 students during the 2014 – 2015 school year.

The county's lack of a centralized plan for transition adversely affects the students with disabilities served by the district in that students frequently reach high school without understanding their disability, themselves, or their abilities. In their 2011 research, Newman, et.al., show correlation regarding students with disabilities being at risk for dropping out of school, and not transitioning into successful post-secondary placements when not effectively served in school (Newman, et. al., 2011). Conversely, Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) found a high correlation between the completions of student selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent gainful employment. Additionally, they provide evidence of the benefits of providing effective, person centered transition services to students with

disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). A lack of person-centered transition contributes to students and young adults arriving to high school without clear goals for themselves or their future. Additionally, students must perceive transition goals to be realistic and attainable. Therefore, the availability of post-secondary opportunities can affect students' goal setting aspirations, and affect students' attitudes regarding their high school and post-secondary endeavors (Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000).

Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff also found a high correlation between the completions of student selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent gainful employment (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000).

The responsibility of addressing transition goals on students' Individualized Education Plan's (IEP) is the responsibility of the teacher who is that student's IEP sponsor at the school-based site. These teachers have a myriad of responsibilities to their school site, the Office of Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and their students. Recently the ESE office of the target district disseminated a Transition Assistance Plan (see Appendix D). This is a two-page form for teachers to fill out with student input, prior to the student's transition Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The form was designed to provide information regarding students' desired post school outcomes, instruction, employment, post-school adult living, and community experience. However, the district does not currently have a system for educating students about their disability, available services, their rights, or potential community based services.



### **Exploratory Research Question**

The exploratory research question that will inform this complex problem of practice is:  
How can a school district provide the appropriate skills needed for a successful transition process of students with disabilities from the K-12 school setting to post-secondary settings?

### **Organizational Context**

The setting for this research is a small county, in rural north Florida, which borders the state of Georgia on the north. It is home to a diverse population both geographically and socio-economically (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2014). The county was founded in 1832 and encompasses 801 square miles. The 2010 United State Census lists its population as 67,531 (United States Census, 2010).

A history of the authority over schools in the state of Florida can be found by reviewing the Constitutions of the State of Florida and the various revisions (Florida, 1861). In 1865, the third revision of Florida's Constitution authorized the election of school administration under the verbiage "all other officers" (Florida, 1865). In 1868, under the fourth revision of Florida's Constitution, the Governor of Florida was empowered to appoint local superintendents of common schools (Florida, 1868). In 1885, Article VIII was written specifically to deal with the cities and counties (Florida, 1885). This revision provided for the election of a superintendent of public instruction among other local officials. The article was revisited in 1900, 1944, and 1965 and changes made to various local governing officials but the authority of the superintendent of schools and the elected School Board have remained independent from other local governing agencies.

The formal organization of this school district dates back to the mid 1800's and encompasses the entire county. The school district is governed by a five-member Board of Education, which meets bi-monthly to manage the global business of the district. The elections for seats on the school board are staggered so that there are always experienced board members sitting, even if an incumbent member is replaced in the election. The Superintendent of Schools is also elected and serves for term increments of four years. He/she acts as the chief executive officer and manages the day-to-day operation of the school district.

There are currently 16 public schools operating in this district: two high schools, one alternative school, an adult education school, three middle schools, and nine elementary schools. All of the schools listed above include some form of services to students with disabilities. The organizational dynamics of this particular district are layered with stratum of senior and upper management supervising directors and building principals. Both directors and building principals oversee their own budgets, even though there are intersections where some student services overlap. The principals have total autonomy in managing their cost centers (a.k.a. schools) and assigned personnel. This design most closely resembles Mintzberg's Divisionalized Form, as each school is a quasi-autonomous unit with its own culture and infrastructure housed inside the larger collective of the school district (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The design does vary from the Divisionalized Form in that certain departments, such as the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department act as support for all of the schools in the district. A diagram of the organizational structure of the county is provided in *Figure 1:1*, to assist the reader in visualizing the structure of the district's organization.

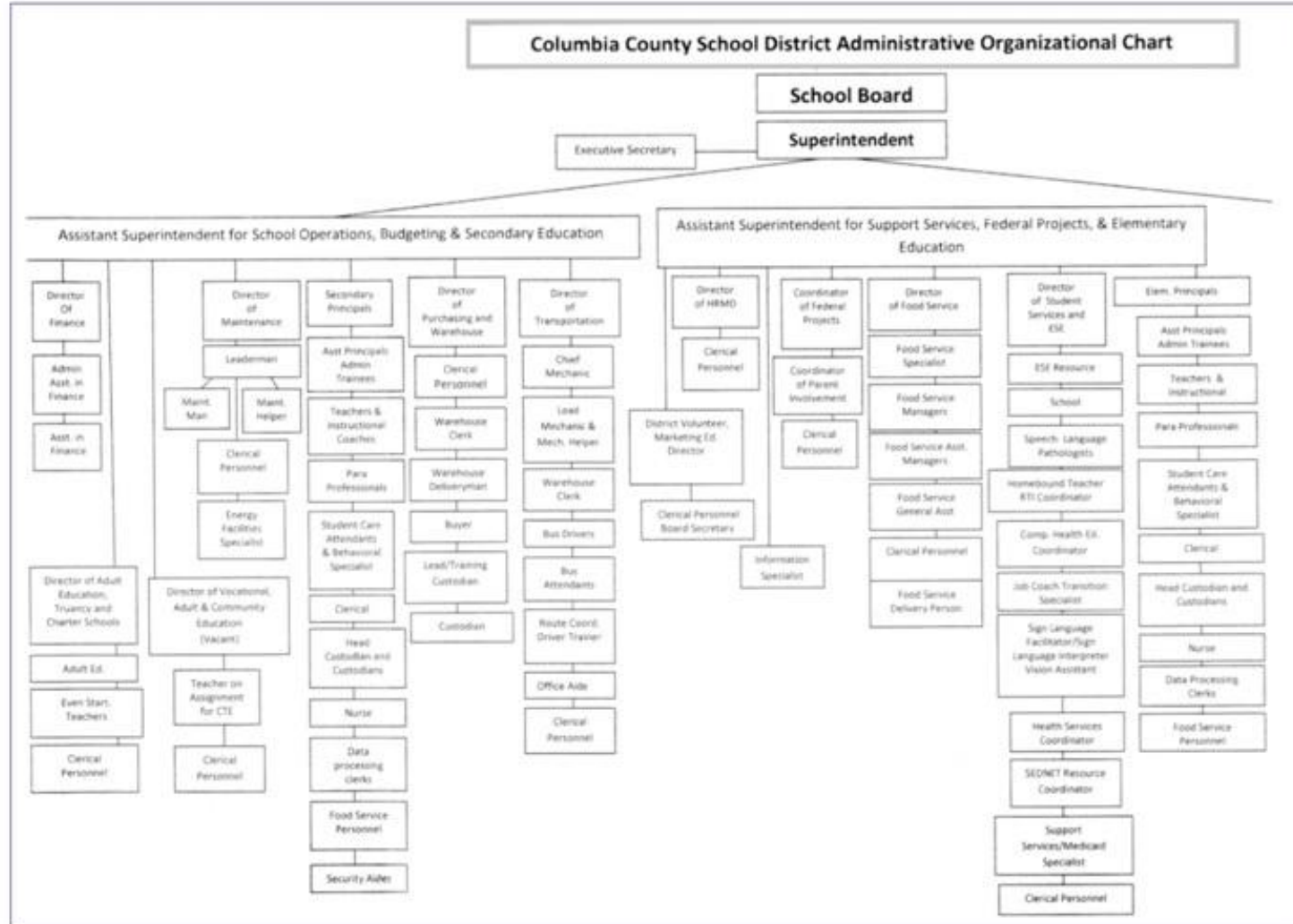


Figure 1-1 District Administrative Organizational Chart

## **Exceptional Student Education**

In this district, as with most districts in the state of Florida, the structure for delivery of services for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) is divisionalized in that there is a district office for Exceptional Student Education, which houses staffing specialists, psychologists, therapy, and job coaches. The principals do not hold supervisory authority over these personnel. The ESE teachers are housed at each school site. They are responsible for providing direct services to the students with disabilities. Additionally, they serve as sponsors for the students they serve and are responsible to write, monitor, and maintain their students Individualized Education Plans. Neither the Director of Exceptional Student Services, or Staffing Specialists charged with overseeing a schools paperwork holds supervisory authority over Exceptional Student Education teachers assigned to school sites. They fall under the supervision of their respective building principals. As with any quasi-autonomous unit design, this service delivery design lends itself to issues with funding, support, and communication. In this district, efforts are made to streamline multitiered compliance through self assesment of IEP paperwork, school based training for ESE teachers, the ESE Director attending monthly elementary principal's meetings, the ESE Director attending bi-monthly secondary principal's meetings, and having a specific staffing specialist assigned to handle each schools ESE paperwork.

## **My Professional Role(s)**

Due to the rural location of the school at which I teach, my professional role is multifaceted. On the one face, I am a classroom teacher responsible for managing two groups of very diverse learners ranging from 15-year-old ninth graders to 22-year-old adults. In this role, I act as an environmental designer, curriculum planner/designer, data analyst, educational guide,

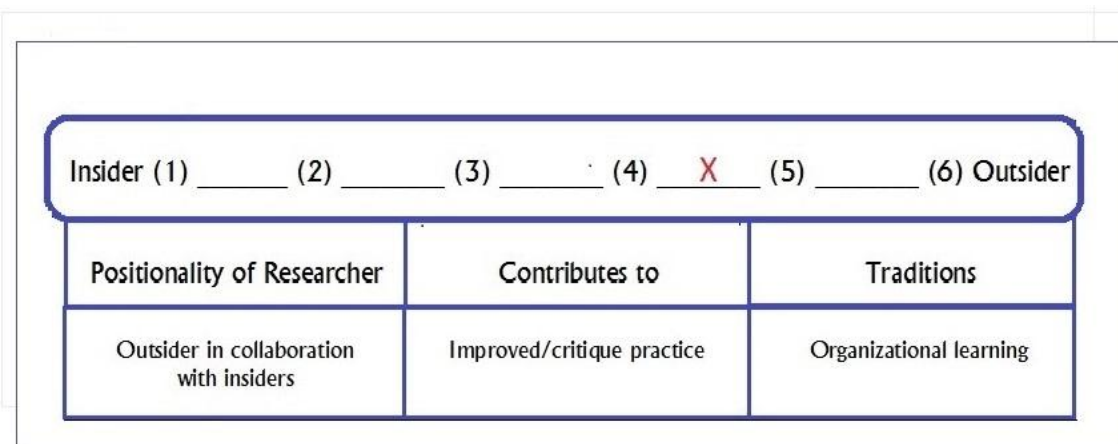
and facilitator. The role also includes that of classroom manager, disciplinarian, surrogate parent, counselor, social worker, and cheerleader. Another facet to my role is that of liaison to our guidance department. In this role, I am responsible for developing student schedules and weaving them into the schools Master Schedule. This must be done in such a way as to orchestrate opportunities for students to participate in elective classes that interest them and serve to benefit their adult aspirations, while making sure they earn the academic credits needed for graduation. Yet another dimension of my professional role is that of individual education plan (IEP) sponsor and transition coordinator to the students in my classes. This role requires that I help students investigate and develop their own individualized transition goals, write each students IEP with input from respective students, progress monitor goals and document IEP's, and administer the Florida Alternate Assessment. Additionally, I coordinate the Non-paid Community Based Work Experience Program for our adult students.

### **Positionality**

Participatory Action Research can be defined as collaborative approach, which incorporates a deliberate reflective process. Herr and Anderson (2015) define action research as an "...inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or a community, but never to or on them." (p. 20)

The purpose of this dissertation in practice is to examine the pedagogical path students with disabilities take throughout their education, from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with the intent to improve their postsecondary quality of life. Utilizing the research of Herr and Anderson to examine the positionality of my professional role as a practitioner and a researcher helps to inform my position in this research.

In my role as a secondary teacher preparing students for their roles as post-secondary adults, I have “insider” perspectives of need. Additionally, as a student who has dealt with her own disability as a student, a post-secondary student, and as a professional, I have unique “insider” perspectives, which can both contribute to the research and must be considered as a limitation in order to maintain objectivity. However, in order to incorporate the input of professionals who have experience at other grade levels, I must enlist the support of experts at other schools. To these educators, I will be an outsider. This places my research towards the outside of the continuum. In figure 1:2 below my positionality is designated at position four.



*Figure 1-2 Positionality of Research*

(Herr, & Anderson, 2015)

## **History and Conceptualization**

### **International Information on Transition**

Internationally there has been a move towards an inclusive, social model of disability policy for over twenty years (Duggan, & Byrne, 2013). In 1993 the United Nations adopted the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunity for People with Disabilities (Duggan, & Byrne, 2013), and in 2006 the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006, Duggan, & Byrne, 2013). The purpose of these actions by the United Nations being to ensure people with disabilities the enjoyment of human rights extended to all people.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains 50 articles related to the rights of people with disabilities. Articles 24, 26, 27, 28, and 29 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) relate directly to the transition process. Part of article 24 communicates the expectation of people with disabilities to be afforded accommodations and access to education, vocational training, and lifelong learning opportunities. Article 26 deals with habilitation and rehabilitation. Article 27 addresses work and employment. Components of article 27 require members to promote the realization of the right of people with disabilities to work. Members are expected to enact legislation to safeguard these rights for people with disabilities and to ensure “effective access” to vocational, technical, and other training opportunities. Article 28 delineates expectations regarding social protection and adequate standards of living. Article 29 addresses public and political life, and Article 30 deals with rights relating to recreation, sports, leisure, and cultural activities.

As of this writing, July 2015, 159 of the members signed the convention, and 86 have ratified the Optional Protocol (United Nations, 2015). Additionally, in 2010 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities "...became the first UN human rights convention to be ratified by the EU itself" (p. 23 Duggan, & Byrne, 2013).

### **National Information on Transition**

In the United States of America, formal educational efforts on behalf of students with disabilities can be traced back to 1817 and Hartford, Connecticut where The American School for the Deaf became the first school in the Western Hemisphere to serve students with disabilities. Federal efforts on behalf of students with disabilities emerge in 1856 with Gallaudet University, also known as the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind, serving students with vision and hearing impairments ("History of Gallaudet," 2015). The school was built on land donated by Amos Kendall who was the Postmaster General under Presidents Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren ("Amos Kendall," 2015). Kendall also was instrumental to the school's incorporation by Congress. In 1864 the institute was authorized by Congress to confer college degrees, and in 1869 the first three diplomas were signed by President Ulysses S. Grant ("History of Gallaudet," 2015).

After this accomplishment, progress and legislation moved very slowly for people with disabilities. Some authors attribute the lack of progress in the United States to a eugenics philosophy, which allowed the legalized sterilization, and euthanization of individuals with disabilities deemed to be undesirable and/or costly (Flexer et al., 2013; Salend, Garrick, Duhaney, Rotatori, Obiakor, & Bakken, 2011).

The atrocities of World War II, advancements in science and medicine, as well as appreciation of wounded veterans who survived the war helped to improve social opinions, and



the United States saw the emergence of a medical model of disabilities (Wolfensberger, 1970; Flexer et al., 2013). 1943 brought legislation, which provided rehabilitation services, and medical care deemed necessary to employability. These services theoretically were available to all people with disabilities; however, in actuality services remained primarily targeted to disabled veterans and prior civil service employees (Wolfensberger, 1970; Flexer et al., 2013).

In 1958, Public Law 85 – 926 authorized the commissioner of education to grant funds to train teachers for “mentally retarded children” (Congress, 85<sup>th</sup>, 1958). However, in 1960, when John F. Kennedy was elected president, funding for students with disabilities remained minimal. Kennedy viewed the situation to be so critical, for a civilized country, that he created a task force to investigate issues pertaining to disabilities before his inauguration (“JFK and People,” 2015).

Due to recommendations from the task force President Kennedy established the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (“JFK and People,” 2015). In October of 1961 President Kennedy appointed a 27-member panel of doctors and scientist to develop an action plan to address the issues and concerns related to people with disabilities. They provided him with over 100 recommendations and on February 5, 1963 President Kennedy addressed Congress in a “Special Message”.

Through Kennedy’s support and the insistence of society, important legislative actions began to evolve. Public Law 88-156 amended the Social Security Act by adding Title XVII also known as the Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963 (Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963).

In 1963, Public Law 88-164 empowered by support from President John F. Kennedy, amended the language to include the wording “... hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, crippled, or other health impaired

children who by reason thereof require special education” (Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963). This legislation was paired with President Kennedy’s push to create services for mental health facilities. The President was assassinated three weeks after signing the Bill.

Cooperative work-study programs emerged during the 1960’s (Halpern, 1991), but with the death of JFK, the next 12 years proved an uphill struggle. 1974 brought increased visibility for career education with the establishment of the Office of Career Education (Halpern, 1991). Their efforts finally culminated in federal legislation (Flexer et al., 2013).

In 1975, through the efforts listed above, Public Law 94-142 was enacted by the 94th Congress (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), Public Law 94-142 required any school receiving Federal dollars to provide students with physical or mental disabilities evaluative services, equal access to education, and educational plans that incorporated input from parents. Students with disabilities were to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The law required educational services be provided in the least restrictive environment, and also provided procedural safeguards so that parents had a venue to dispute educational decisions regarding their children. This was the legislative birth of transition policy in the United States of America.

The effort did not end with Public Law (PL) 94-142). The struggle for equality outline legislatively continued in the schools, the legislature, and in the court system. 1976 brought an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1972 requiring services for students with physically disabilities wanting to attend college. In 1977, Public Law 95-207 specifically identified people with disabilities as a target population for services through the Career Education Implementation Incentive Act (Halpern, 1991). The early 80’s brought renewed legislative struggles (“Disability

Rights,” 2015; Frenze, 1996), but in 1986, Public Law 99-457 amended EHA to extend a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to include students with disabilities beginning at the age of three and provided grant incentives for the ages birth to two (Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986; Gregory, 2007). Societal opinions continued to improve and a shift away from the medical rehabilitative school of thought towards an outcome-focused expectation was in process. More importantly, people with disabilities began to advocate for their own rights to participate fully in the world around them (Flexer et al., 2013).

In 1983, Congress funded the first National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS1) to assess the special education services for students with disabilities ages 13 - 21 during the 1983–1984 school year who were in grade 7 or above (Newman et al., 2011). The six-year study used random sampling methods to survey over 8,000 students with disabilities from a nationally representative sample that crossed disability categories, socio-economic categories, and geographic regions. NLTS1 found that students with disabilities continue to experience lack of participation in employment, and postsecondary education. It also found that certain programs were correlated with significantly improved postsecondary outcomes for young adults with disabilities. The programs showing improved outcomes were vocational programs and community-based work experience programs. The study also found the utilization of vocational and community-based work experience programs for high school students with disabilities varied (Newman et al., 2011)

During this time, the students who had benefitted from the FAPE provision in the 1975 legislation were beginning to exit school to uncertain futures (Will, 1984). Several advocates for people with disabilities voiced concerns and suggestions calling for strategies to improve potential postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. In her 1984 paper Madeline

Will, the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, compared postsecondary transition for students with disabilities to a bridge needing "...both a solid span and a secure foundation at either end." (p. 2). She further postulated that the identification of needed services would assist all people with disabilities in their transition (Will, 1984)

Andrew Halpern, a strong proponent for people with disabilities, called for a broader range of transition than the narrow bridges proposed by Will (Halpern, 1985). In their 1987 article, Benz and Halpern's results indicated a lack of written interagency agreements, discrepancies as to who was responsible for planning student transition, a lack of parental involvement, and a lack of follow-up data (Benz and Halpern, 1987).

In 1990, The 101<sup>st</sup> Congress enacted legislation to replace Public Laws 94-142 and 99-457. The legislation, public law 101-476, reauthorized and strengthened the components of EHA and changed the name of the law to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990). IDEA was the first legislation in the United States of America to be considered a comprehensive law of addressing the civil rights and needs of people with disabilities. It is also known as the "Person first" law, with the intention of recognizing the student as a person with a disability instead of a "disabled person".

For the purpose of this dissertation in practice, the most important component of the IDEA legislation was the transition services requirement. Legislatively, transition services were required to be addressed in students Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) no later than the age of 16. Additionally, students were required to attend their IEP meeting, and decisions regarding transitional components of the IEP were to be based on the student's strengths, skills, and preferences (Aleman, 1991).

As the trend toward a person first philosophy for students with disabilities grew, so did the importance of outcome-focused expectations. Advocate groups, service providers, researchers, and legislators sought more information as to what factors influenced the quality of life of people with disabilities. Many advocates and researchers felt quality of life could not be separated from other issues related to service delivery, education, and what was to become known as Transition.

In his book, Thinking About and Discussing Quality of Life. Quality of Life: Perspectives and Issues, Goode (1990) addressed the concept succinctly:

An enhanced quality of life for persons with disabilities cannot be separated from the three major trends that are currently impacting our service delivery system. In their simplest form, the trends include living, learning, and working in integrated environments; empowering persons with disabilities to choose and make decisions regarding their welfare and future; and holding service providers accountable for person-referenced outcomes that reflect an enhanced independence, productivity, community integration, and quality of life (Goode, 1990, p. 235).

However, if these trends are going to significantly enhance a person's quality of life, we need collectively to pursue a number of principles, parameters, and procedures that include:

- ❖ Principles that will foster policy development
- ❖ Parameters that will guide research efforts
- ❖ Procedures that will underlie service delivery (p. 235)

These three P's are as significant today as they were in the 90's. As quality of life frameworks gained acceptance in the 90's so did outcome-oriented expectations.

In 1997 amendments to IDEA funded the second National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS2). Patterned after the NLTS1 the NLTS2 was a 10 year Long study designed to compare data with the NLTS1, regarding post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities (Flexer et al. 2013; Newman et al., 2011; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, and Levine, 2005). More extensive than the first longitudinal study, this research had the data from the first study, NLTS1 to use as comparison. Data from NLTS2 was collected and examined in waves over time (Newman et al., 2011.) In the area of postsecondary transition NLTS2 findings were consistent with those of the NLTS1 in that students with disabilities continue to be less likely than their nondisabled peers to pursue postsecondary education or find gainful full-time employment (Newman et al., 2011; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, and Knokey, 2009; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, and Levine, 2005). The NLTS2 showed no improvement for students with disabilities in the quality of life area of independent living with large percentages remaining single and living with parents. It further showed full-time employment rates for students with disabilities in 2003 two years after graduation were 39%, an 18% reduction from the 57% employment rate of the comparable group in 1987 (Cameto, and Levine, 2005; Newman, et al. 2011). Additionally, the NLTS2 data indicated over 50% of the students with disabilities in the 2003 cohort had experienced some sort of formal negative interaction with authority figures i.e. fired, arrested, or disciplined at school. This was a 17% increase over the 1987 cohort (Flexer et al. 2013; Newman, et al. 2011; Wagner et al., 2005).

Researchers, advocates, and people with disabilities themselves begin to advocate for improvements in postsecondary quality of life for persons with disabilities. In his 1993 article, *Quality of life as a framework for evaluating transition outcomes*, Halpern purported that the satisfaction of persons with disabilities with their own quality of life to be the ultimate litmus test

as only the individuals themselves can attest to their own feelings of fulfillment. Halpern, who had been instrumental in the 1990 legislative reform of public law 101-476 IDEA, called for post school outcomes to be expanded to include additional quality of life domains (Halpern, 1993). As with previous reforms, legislation took time and process, but research continued and during this time the field of Exceptional Student Education saw growth in the areas of person centered initiatives and self-determination.

Research, advocacy and legislative improvements concerning transition continued during this time period in the United States. In 1997, the amendment to IDEA improved transition by changing the Legislative requirement for student attendance at their IEP meetings from the age of 16 to the age of 14 years of age. Additionally, transition service needs were to be included in the students' IEP no later than the age of 14. Transition had become a viable vehicle to help move students from the educational setting to their adult world.

As research and knowledge about transition grew, so did the understanding that transition could not be a one size fits all concept. Transition would need to be more personalized and complex than the Three Bridge Model introduced by Madeline Will in 1983. A perusal of the literature of the 1990's provides a multitude of concepts relating to postsecondary transition. Steps to Self-Determination (Field & Hoffman, 1996) and the Self-Directed IEP Model, (Cross, Cooke, Wood, & Test, 1999) are some of the transition models developed to address the need to prepare students for post-secondary outcomes.

Public Law 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act, was passed by the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States. Provisions of this legislation, which was tied to federal Title 1 funding, called for academic standards based reform. As a component of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was signed by President George W. Bush in 2002, any state that receives federal funding has to

develop an accountability plan describing how the state will determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the schools in the state (Conley & Hinchman, 2004).

Legislative reform for transition services came in the form of updating IDEA. A component of the 2004 amendment to Public Law 108-446 enacted by the 108th Congress of the United States of America, and also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Here to fore referred to as IDEA-2004, the amendment required that all students with disabilities receive coordinated transition services that are individualized and focused specifically on post-secondary success.

The statute itself declares the reasoning of amending IDEA to be:

... (4) However, the implementation of this title has been impeded by low expectations, and an insufficient focus on applying replicable research on proven methods of teaching and learning for children with disabilities. (5) Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004).

The post-secondary areas identified in the 2004 legislation as being required to be addressed were independent living, employment, post-secondary education, and community participation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004). Transition services defined in the IDEA (2004) were:

a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that: (A) is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary



education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; (B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and (C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation (IDEA, 2004).

Each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was now required to address these areas and include information regarding the student's strengths, data tracked as to what the student's abilities are, and how the student's disability could adversely affect the student's participation and progress in the general curriculum (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004).

### **Local Efforts towards Transition**

The district has made efforts to comply with the letter as well as the spirit of legislative mandates set forth in Public Law 94-142, IDEA, and IDEA 2004. From 1991 to 1993, the district had in place a staffing specialist who worked primarily as transition Specialist with secondary students. When she left the county, the position was not filled due to budget cuts. From 1993 to 2003, the county procured limited support from Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS). FDLRS provided assistance for high school level students to learn jobs skills, prepare college or vocational school applications and ultimately to find employment, however, these services were sporadic and limited in scope. Isolated efforts have been made to get representatives from local organizations (Columbia Association for Retarded Citizens,

Vocational Rehabilitation, and other agencies), colleges, and vocational schools to come to IEP meetings. Additional efforts made by the district to improve the transition of students with disabilities have included providing access to several curriculum and the Project Ten web site. Secondary teachers were also given access to do the Dare to Dream program with their students (Previous Staffing Specialist, personal communication, June, 2015).

Another effort made by the state and the district was alternative graduation opportunities. From the late-nineties through 2013, the county offered students an Option 2 Diploma. This diploma option allowed students to graduate with a combination of job experience hours and academic credits. Also during this same period, exit summaries were done for students going into their senior year (Previous Staffing Specialist, personal communication, June, 2015). Beginning 2012 the district began using Summaries of Performance, which are completed during student's junior year to provide a comprehensive picture of the student's abilities and needs in various domains.

Currently, the county provides all secondary students with disabilities transition goals on their IEP's, and summaries of performance are written for all 11<sup>th</sup> grade students with disabilities. A Summary of Performance is a companion document to a student's IEP. It documents a student's academic achievement and functional abilities and provides recommendations as to what assistance the student might need in pursuing post-secondary goals. Summaries of performance are updated as needed during student's senior year.

The county also has a Third Party Cooperative Agreement with Vocational Rehabilitative Services (VR) to provide job-coaching services for students who have qualified as VR clients. However, this program only served 11 student during the 2014 – 2015 school year (ESE director, personal communication, May, 2015).

### ***District Pilot Program***

During the 2014-2015 school year, the district's ESE office piloted the use of Standing Up for Me from Project 10 as part of the curriculum for the Learning Strategies class at one of the schools in the county, which serves both middle school and high school students. The curriculum addresses the IEP, interest inventories, student rights and responsibilities, student profiles, Summaries of Performances, transition goals, and advocacy skills. No formal data was collected on the pilot. The ESE Director expressed the attempt was partially successful at the middle school level and that she would like to see it expanded to include other schools and all grades K thru twelve (ESE director, personal communication, June, 2015).

### **Factors that Impact the Problem**

The literature confirms one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of students with disabilities (SWD) into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments is meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The literature also indicates that there is a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level (Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008) and further indicates that "teachers are not implementing effective transition planning because of educators' lack of knowledge, competence, or time to deliver transition services" (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010, p. 103).

The absence of an integrated transition plan adversely affects the students with disabilities served by the district in that students frequently reach high school without understanding their disability, themselves, or their abilities. In their report, Newman, et.al,

(2011) showed a correlation between SWD's dropping out of school and not transitioning into successful post-secondary placements when they had not received effective transition services while at the secondary level. Conversely, in their study, Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) found a high correlation between the completion of student selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent gainful employment (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). Additionally, they provide evidence of the benefits of providing effective, person centered transition services to students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). This supports the concern that a lack of person-centered transition services at the elementary and middle school levels contributes to students and young adults arriving to high school without an understanding of themselves or clear goals for themselves or their future.

Currently, the county insures that all secondary SWD have transition goals on their IEP's. A Summary of Performance is written for each 11<sup>th</sup> grade SWD and updated, as needed, during student's senior year. The county also has a Third Party Cooperative Agreement with Vocational Rehabilitative Services (VR) to provide job-coaching services for students who have qualified as VR clients. However, this program only served 11 students during the 2014 – 2015 school year (ESE director, personal communication May 2015). Additionally, there is no targeted transition training for SWD's in the primary and intermediate grade level, and limited transition training for SWD's at the secondary level.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the ESE office piloted the use of Standing Up for Me from Project 10 as part of the curriculum for the Learning Strategies class at one of the schools in the county, which serves both middle school and high school students. The curriculum addresses the IEP, interest inventories, student rights and responsibilities, student profiles, Summaries of Performances, transition goals, and advocacy skills. No formal data was collected on the pilot.

The ESE Director expressed the attempt was partially successful at the middle school level and that she would like to see it expanded to include other schools and all grades K thru twelve (ESE director, personal communication, June, 2015).

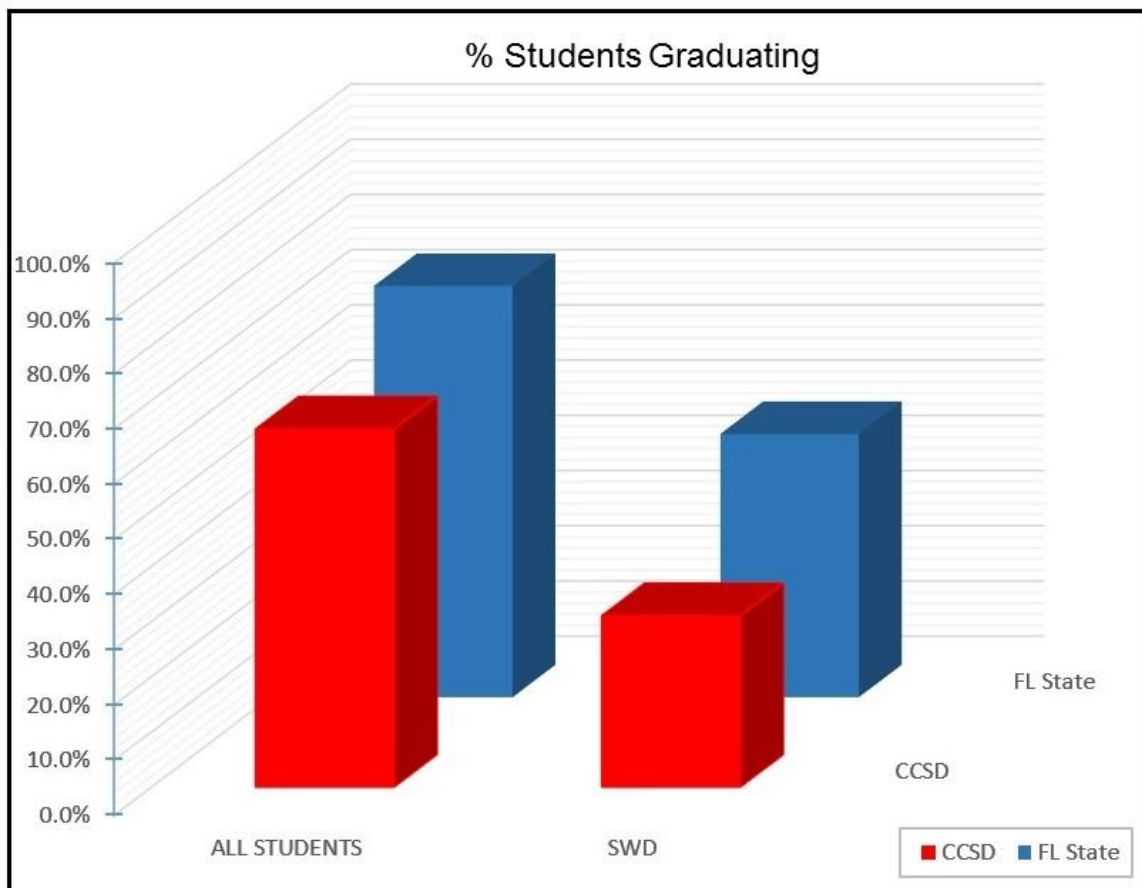
Components of IDEA (2004) require the state to submit a State Performance Plan (SPP) and an Annual Performance Report (APR) which provides data on Transition Indicators. The indicators related to this project are as follows: Indicator 1 (Graduation Rates), Indicator 2 (Dropout Rates), Indicator 13 (Postsecondary Goals), and Indicator 14 (Postsecondary Outcomes). County specific, current data regarding these indicators will become available to this writer in October/November of 2015. However, historical graduation data supports the concerns as demonstrated by the significant gap between the graduation rates of students with disabilities and the students without disabilities in the 2012 cohort. A cohort is defined as the group of students who entered ninth-grade in the same semester and matriculated through four years of high school, earning twenty-four credits towards their high school diploma.

In 2012, 64.8% of the 2008 cohort of students without disabilities in the county graduated with a standard diploma. However, only 31.0 % of the students with disabilities in that cohort graduated with a standard diploma (FLDOE, 2012). Additionally, the county falls 16% below the average for the state of Florida. Figure 1-3 below provides a chart of this information and figure 1-4 provides a visual graph.

This table shows the percentage of students who graduated with a standard high school diploma, in 2012, within four years of initial entry into 9th grade.		
<i>Categories</i>	<u>CCSD</u> District %	<b>Florida State %</b>
ALL STUDENTS	64.8%	74.5%
STUDENTS W/Disabilities	31.0%	47.7%

*Information to create this table (FLDOE, 2012).*

*Figure 1-3 Percentage of students who graduated in 2012 comparison*



*Figure 1-4 Visual depiction of the disparity of 2012 graduation rate comparison*

## **Dissertation Plan**

### **The Proposed Framework**

Students are required to be included in their own Transition Individual Education Plans (TIEP) beginning at age 14. However, in order to be active, contributing participants in their own Transition IEP Meetings; students must be prepared for their role. To facilitate the goal of this Dissertation in Practice, the intent was to design a user-friendly K-12 framework that serves to assist teachers in the implementation of transition education. At the secondary level, students should be actively participating in their Transition Individualized Education Plans (TIEP) and the transition process. Additionally, the framework was designed in such a way as to assist elementary teachers in their quest to prepare primary and intermediate SWD to participate in the IEP process, and to be ready to fully participate in a secondary transition curriculum. This was based on the premise that SWD's of all ages need to understand themselves as a person and be able to fully participate in their own IEP in order to take full advantage of the accommodations and supports available to them through the IEP process.

The proposed implementation framework was designed to facilitate the identification of transition resources and activities teachers can utilize in providing instruction for SWD of all ability levels from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Resources that are user friendly and utilize principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) allow teachers to differentiate instruction based upon the needs and ability level of each student.

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

Universal Design for Learning, frequently referred to as UDL, is a method for designing instruction with flexibility built in. By building lessons and planning for varying abilities, and sensory/motor issues instruction and activities are designed to engage all students (Cast.org,

N.D.). This creates a welcoming climate of learning across cultural, socioeconomic, ethnicities and students who are differently able (National Center on UDL, N.D.).

Two schools of thought can be found in the literature as to the origin of UDL. Meyer, Rose and Gordon credit the development to neuroscience and brain research (2015), whereas Friend and Bursuck, (2009) suggest the concept grew out of the field of construction and architecture. Regardless of the origin, the methodological uses of UDL are advantageous. Universal Design for Learning was defined in 2008 by the Higher Opportunity Education Act as The term UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that:

- (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and
- (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient (National Center on UDL, N.D.).

UDL is designed or built on three foundational principles. They are commonly recognized as (1) Flexibility of Representation (2) Flexibility of Expression and (3) Flexibility of Engagement.

### ***Flexibility of Representation***

The first principle, Provide Multiple Means of Representation, allows for flexibility in the presentation of content. The educator or facilitator should plan for variations in the way content may be accessed by students. This can be done by weaving into the presentation of material flexibility that will allow for visual or auditory access of information. An example of this would be to access or create a cartoon video, with narration, that depicts the information. This could be



done by a teacher at the site Make Beliefs Comix. Providing flexible ways to access subject matter not only accommodates students with sensory deficits (deaf or blind), in advance, it also allows learners with learning disabilities, and/or cultural barriers additional options to access the information. This is adapting the ‘what’ of the subject matter (Cast.org, N.D.).

### ***Flexibility of Expression***

The second principle, Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression, respects the fact that students have different strengths when interacting with the environment and the content. This principle encourages incorporating into the structure of the lesson flexible ways for students to respond and interact with instructional materials. This can now be done through a range of methods. Traditional adaptations such as concrete manipulatives, story webs or options available through word processing programs allow some scaffolding. However, modern technology has provided for virtual mathematics manipulatives, speech to text narration, and web applications where learners can create their own comic strips to express their thoughts. An example of flexibility of expression is to allow students to designing their own cartoon video to express what they know about the subject matter. y giving students these choices not only are special needs accommodated without stigmatization, but also the content will be more inviting to all students, which encourages deeper participation. This is adapting the ‘how’ of the subject matter (Cast.org, N.D.).

### ***Flexibility of Engagement***

The third principle, Provide Multiple Means of Engagement, seeks to engage student’s attention by providing options for engagement that appeals to various student preferences. Learners process information in various ways and will attend to information and activities they perceive as having value or worth. By offering learners activities that are culturally and socially

relevant teachers will gain their attention. Teachers should also provide a variety of scaffold choice for students to engage with the content students will be more likely to attend to the targeted academic goals. One strategy to use would be to help students create a project calendar to guide a group project. This is adapting the ‘why’ of the subject matter (Cast.org, N.D.).

### **District Support**

Expected district support for this dissertation in practice included continuing the project by facilitating input from both general education and exceptional education teachers across grade levels and by supporting the multi-media needs of implementation as the framework evolves.

The stakeholders for this project included the ESE department staff, ESE teachers, general education teachers, students with disabilities, and student’s parents.

The literature indicates one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of SWD’s into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments is meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The literature also indicates there is a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level (Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008), and further indicates that “teachers are not implementing effective transition planning because of educators’ lack of knowledge, competence, or time to deliver transition services” (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010 p.103).

## **Summary of the Proposed Framework**

The proposed Framework, was intended to target easily accessible resources that are user-friendly, and designed using UDL principles discussed above. The intent of this design was to address the majority of the factors identified in the literature as barriers to the implementation of effective transition planning for SWD (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010; Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008)

The proposed Framework addressed the implementation of foundational elements during the primary and intermediate grades, which will prepare students for participation in meaningful transition experiences at the secondary level. Additionally, the framework facilitates differentiation at all levels, including the secondary level, thereby facilitating the implementation of meaningful transition planning experiences at the secondary level. The literature informs, meaningful transition planning experiences lead to meaningful transition goals, which result in the successful transition of SWD into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010; Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008).

## **Action Plan**

In creating a plan for the pilot, the researcher sought and obtained permission to use and modify the survey disseminated in association with Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida, authored by Joyce H. Lubbers Florida Department of Education, Jeanne B. Repetto, University of Florida, Gainesville, and Susan P. McGorray University of Florida, Gainesville (Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008). She solicited and obtained IRB approval which included permission to recruit survey participants within the target district via email. More details regarding the survey are shared on page 49, in Chapter Two: The Pilot Study.

There are five domains related to transition that are specifically referenced in IDEA 2004 and are essential to successful student transition. These domains are education, training, employment, community participation and independent living skills. Building on the spirit of IDEA, sub-domains included in the preliminary framework design included celebrating success and embracing differences at the primary level. Students and teachers can use the student friendly site Chogger to design their own cartoon video to express what they know about different cultures and disabilities. One resource The URL for Chogger is <http://chogger.com/> . Sub-domains included in the preliminary framework design for the elementary level were disability exploration, goal setting activities, self-efficacy exercises, aptitude exploration, and career exploration. One multi-media resource for career exploration is the student tab on the Bureau of Labor Statistics web site at <http://www.bls.gov/home.htm>.

During the middle grades career exploration continues. Students need to develop a working knowledge of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and self-advocacy. This cultivates the skills students need to be active participants in their IEP's during high school. When students enter high school they should be able to develop a working knowledge of laws and regulations pertaining to their disability and their rights and responsibilities. They should be active participants in their own IEP, transition planning, goal setting, and goal attainment.

The K-12 Transition Framework is intended to be a continually evolving practical design that can be updated and improved to stay abreast of technology, new resources, and statute changes. Figure 1-5 below demonstrates the levels of engagement, which were the foundation of the preliminary K – 12 Transition Framework. Sub-domains were included to demonstrate what skills might be introduced to students at each level. However, the final design was informed by analyzing the data procured during the pilot.

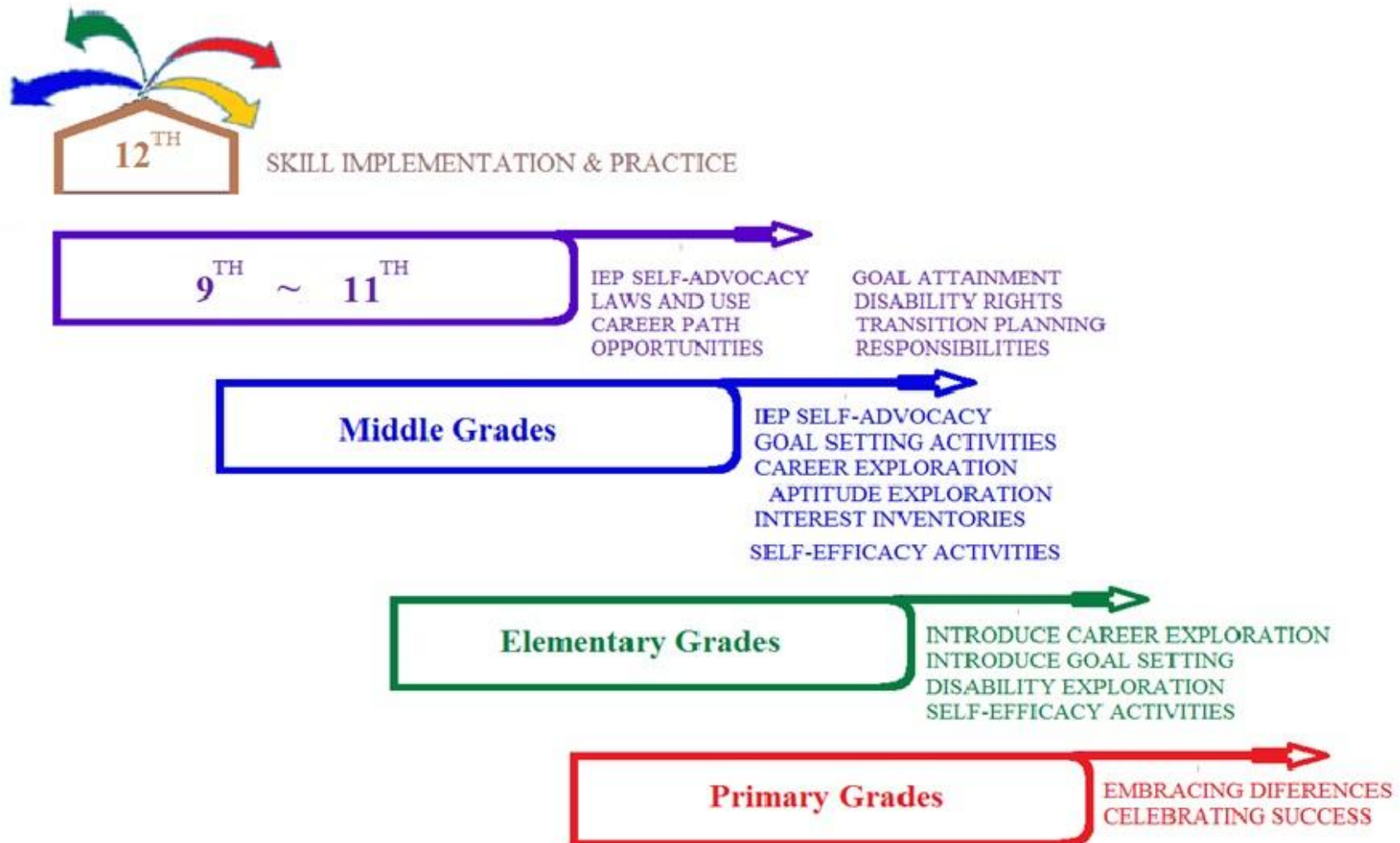


Figure 1-5 Preliminary Framework Design

## **CHAPTER 2: THE PILOT STUDY**

### **The Problem of Practice**

Sixty nine percent of students with disabilities in a small north Florida school district failed to complete high school and transition into productive post-secondary experiences. Therefore, the problem of practice this Dissertation in Practice will address is the lack of a consistent transition continuum for students with disabilities to develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

### **Design Need**

The need for the design was initially determined by collaboration with the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district and colleagues in both the professional setting and the university setting. The director shared that teachers, at the secondary level in the district, were expressing concern regarding the majority of students with disabilities arriving to high school with little to no understanding of post-secondary transition. Additionally, teachers expressed a lack of time to incorporate transition practices effectively at the secondary levels. During several conversations with the director of the target district, both in person and via telephone, issues were discussed where the target district was lacking either through compliance data and/or self-monitoring. Specifically, the gap in graduation rates, as well as the district not meeting state and federal targets for post-secondary transition, was discussed at length.

In December of 2004, through the authority of the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), the federal government mandated annual reporting on

indicators related to K through 12 schools from states receiving federal funds. IDEA, gave states until the year 2014 to have the reporting system in place. In Florida, this is done through Florida's State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (FLDOE, 2015). Specifically related to this research, the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report contains Local Education Authority (LEA) Profiles for school districts throughout the state of Florida. LEA Profiles are the sections of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report that contain information that compares districts to the state required levels across 16 indicators of the State Systemic Improvement Plan. The intent is to provide a measure for each district to use in planning for systemic improvement in exceptional education programs throughout the state (FLDOE, 2015).

The LEA Profile is divided into five sections. They are:

- ❖ Section One: Educational Benefit
- ❖ Section Two: Educational Environment
- ❖ Section Three: Prevalence
- ❖ Section Four: Parent Involvement
- ❖ Section Five: Selected State Performance Plan Indicators.

Section One, Educational Benefit, provides information on school completion and post-school outcomes for students. Section Two, Educational Environment, provides information on the percentage of time students with disabilities are educated with their nondisabled peers, as well as information regarding risk ratios suspensions and/or expulsions for students with disabilities, as compared to nondisabled peers. Section Three, Prevalence, provides data as to the percentage of students evaluated within the required 60-day period, as well as risk ratios of

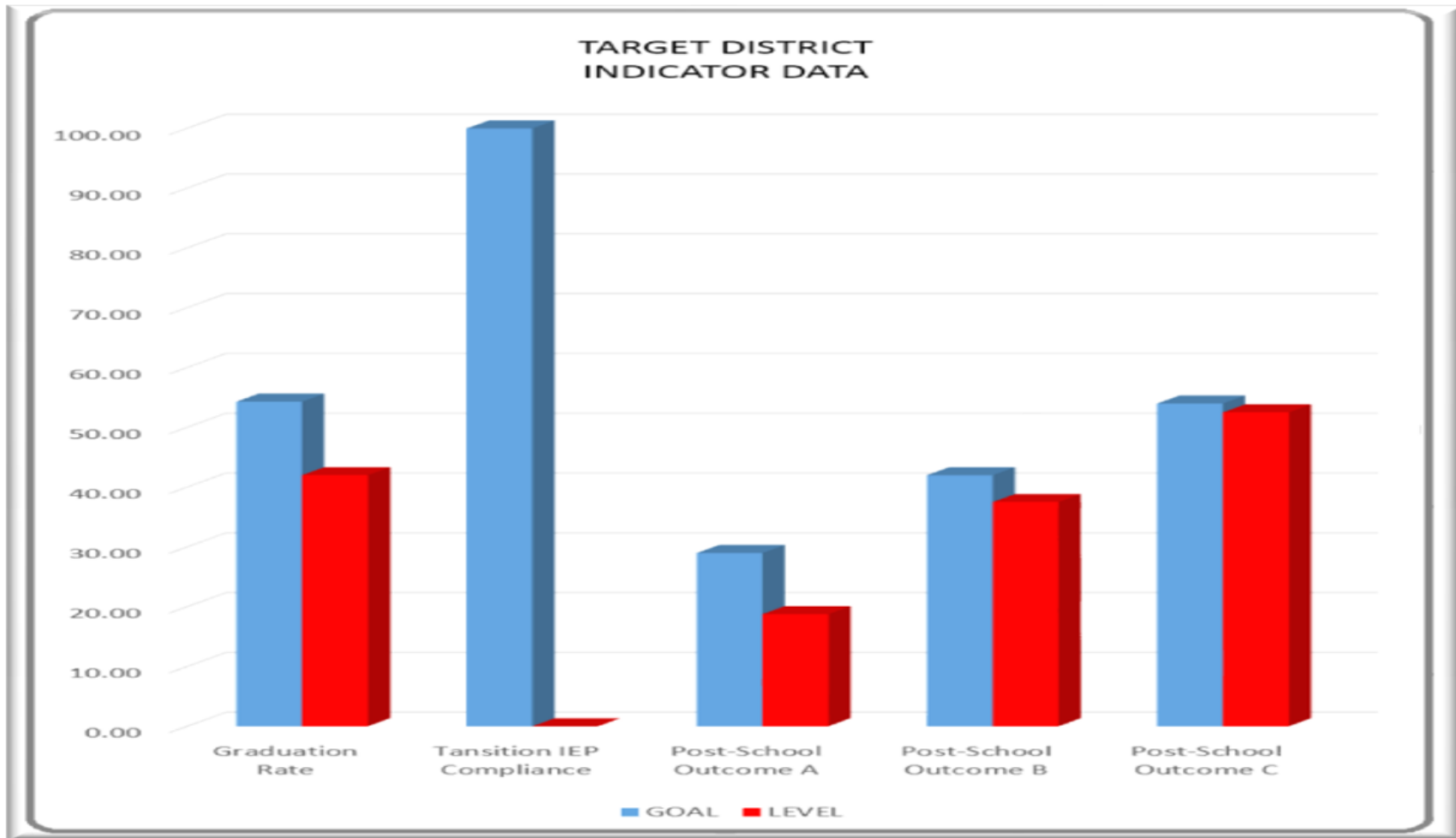
racial/ethnic groups being identified as disabled. Section Four, Parent Involvement, shows the results of voluntary parent surveys which addressed parent perception regarding schools facilitating parent involvement as a way to improve services and outcomes for students with disabilities. Section Five, Selected State Performance Plan Indicators, is a table of 14 of the 16 targeted state indicators, which delineates the targeted percentage for the specific category, the district's data, and an indicator as to whether or not the district met the target set for that year in the State Systemic Improvement Plan. The full LEA document can be found as Appendix C in the appendices. Please note that the data in the 2015 LEA profile for indicators 1, 2, and 4 are from the 2012 - 2013 school year.

The symbiotic effect of secondary transition activities on student retention/graduation and the benefit of earning a diploma on post-secondary opportunities are supported by the literature (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002; & Newman, et. al., 2011). The data, from the LEA section for the targeted district of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, supports the relationship purported in the literature. Indicators 1, 13 and 14 are the items in the report that relate directly to post-secondary transition for students with disabilities.

Indicator 1 evaluates the targeted district's graduation rate, Indicator 13 evaluates the targeted district's Transition IEP compliance rate, and Indicator 14 evaluates Post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Indicator 1 set the goal for 54.3% of students to graduate with a standard diploma in the 2012-2013 school year. With only 42.00% of students graduating with a standard diploma, the target district did not meet this goal. The goal for indicator 13 was to have 100% of the IEPs for students with disabilities, aged 16 and above, to include annually updated, measurable, appropriate postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments, and related to the student's transition service needs. The target district, with 0.00%



compliance, did not meet this goal. Indicator 14 contained three separate goals. The first was for 29% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. Data for the target district were 18.75% of students with disabilities documented as enrolled in higher education; the target district did not meet this goal. The second goal for indicator 14 was for 42% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be found either competitively employed or enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 37.50% of students with disabilities documented in either of these categories, did not meet this goal. The third goal for indicator 14 was for 54% of students with disabilities, exiting school in the 2012 - 2013 school year to be documented as enrolled in higher education, enrolled in some form of postsecondary training program, competitively employed, or engaged in some other type of employment within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 52.50% of students with disabilities documented in any of these categories, did not meet this goal. *Figure 2-1* below provides a visual comparing the target district data to the LEA goals for the indicators related to this research.



*Figure 2-1 Target District LEA Data compared to state goals for Indicators 1, 13, 14A, 14B, and 14C*

The LEA data, combined with the literature offering sustenance for the concerns expressed by teachers in the target district, prompted the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district to seek information as to the breadth and depth of these concerns. The director also wanted to know if teachers had suggestions as to how the most efficient impact could be made on the aforementioned issues. Her interest melded with the scope of the Dissertation in Practice design, and served to create the infrastructure for this research endeavor.

### **The Significance of the Design**

The K-12 Transition Framework is unique in that students with disabilities under the age of 14 have not been formally included in plans for their education or their post-secondary transition plans prior to this research. Due to federal requirements related to Transition Individualized Education Plans (TIEP) and transition planning (IDEA, 2004), research and studies addressing transition have been targeted at populations 14 and older.

### **Potential Benefits to the Problem of Practice**

This K – 12 Transition Framework will serve to formalize and communicate a written transition plan for the targeted district. By designing the framework to address all grade levels and disseminating it through the K – 12 setting, the framework will serve to communicate the district's support for the post-secondary transition process. The framework and supporting documents will identify how efforts at early grade levels create inroads that can serve as anchors and a foundational basis for students as they progress through subsequent grade levels and learning milestones. The framework will provide a guide to assist teachers and other support personnel in targeting activities with students into a zone where time and efforts can be maximized by targeting activities that are developmentally appropriate, user friendly, and

designed with the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

### **Similar Context**

There is a paucity of literature relating post-secondary transition of students with disabilities to a continuum beginning in elementary school grades. Additionally, a transition implementation design that includes intermediate and primary grades, was not found in the literature after an exhaustive search, which included the assistance and guidance of a research librarian. However, the literature does demonstrate the benefit of the use of models and frameworks to enhance learning and improve pedagogical outcomes.

Imbedded into the foundation of modern education is Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl 1956). The original taxonomy, published in 1956, was a model used to classify learning objectives according to levels of complexity within the domains of cognitive, affective and sensory (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Though not without criticisms and revision, many philosophies of education can trace their origins back to the original taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Additionally, models and frameworks are still used in educational settings to facilitate learning and improve student outcomes. Frameworks have been used recently to improve collaborative problem solving skills with primary students (Gu, Chen, Zhu, & Lin, 2015), facilitate model-based inquiry through the use of an agent-based programmable modeling (Xiang, & Passmore, 2015), and boost phonics literacy through integrating iPad applications into classroom instruction (Northrop, & Killeen, 2013). In each of these studies, frameworks served as a guide to improve educational outcomes for students.

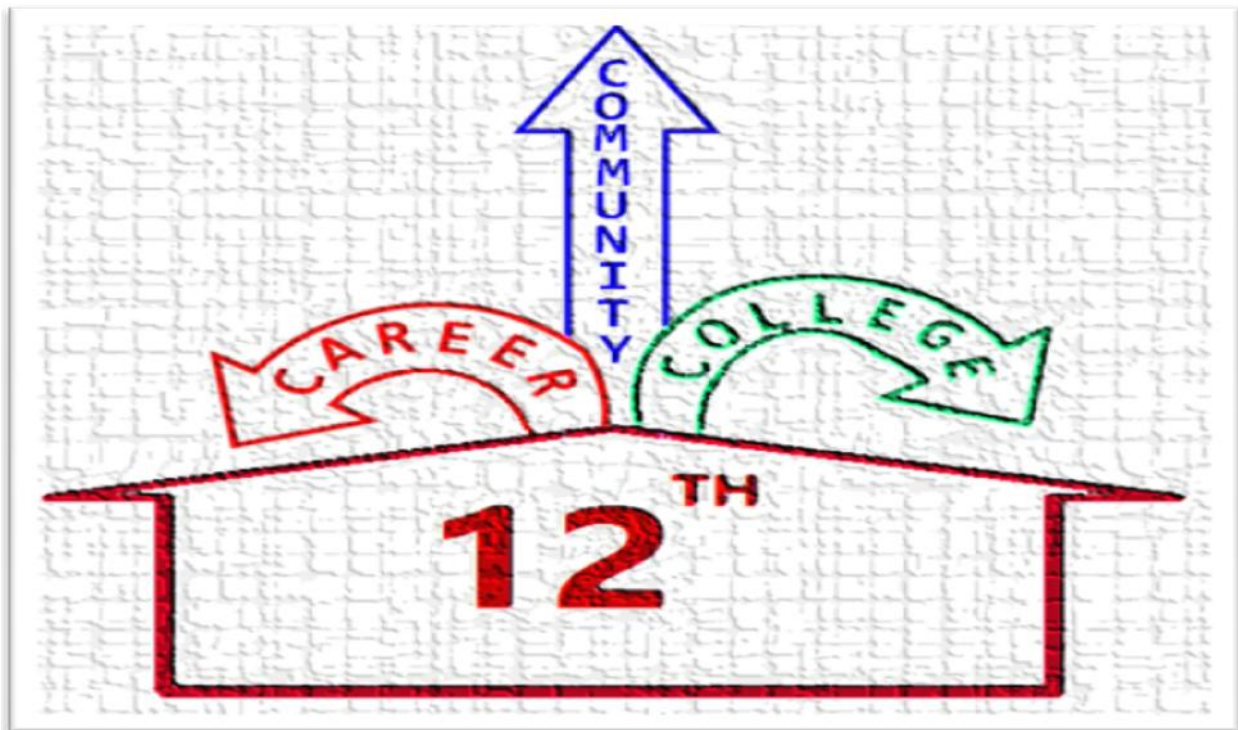
This Transition Framework will serve to parallel similar results in the post-secondary transition of students with disabilities within the confines of Exceptional Student Education. The K – 12 Transition Implementation Framework will guide and facilitate efforts to include students at younger grade levels in the transition process. This will introduce them to and include them in their own transition continuum. By expanding transition efforts to include elementary students with disabilities, these students will have an opportunity to design a stronger and deeper foundation on which to construct their transition goals and plans.

The framework will serve to build a foundational base during the elementary grades to scaffold later pursuits of students with disabilities at the secondary level. Students' connecting to their prior knowledge about a subject is a widely accepted strategy for enhancing the learning experience of students (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). Introducing students with disabilities to concepts related to post-secondary transition while they are still in the elementary grades will begin to build their knowledge structure regarding their future endeavors. Thus, potential knowledge growth will be enhanced at the secondary level when students with disabilities have the prior knowledge to connect future learning about opportunities, education and careers.

With a strong foundation to support transition goalsetting and planning combined with knowledge structure that relates activities to future goals, students with disabilities become part of the solution path that leads to deeper, meaningful, person-centered planning. This in turn will translate into successful transition of students with disabilities into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

## Elements of the Preliminary Design

The concept of beginning with the end in mind, a backward planning process, helped to create the preliminary design of the framework. The summative goal of Exceptional Student Education is for students with disabilities to exit their secondary setting being college, career, and/or community ready. The apex of the framework *Figure 2-2* exemplifies these potential paths.



*Figure 2-2 Post-Secondary Paths*

Students with disabilities are “differently-abled,” and the specific skill set needed will vary according to the individualized needs, abilities and circumstances of each student.

However, competence in, or pathways to competence are needed in some specific key areas for all students with disabilities prior to them beginning their postsecondary life. These areas are depicted at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level of the framework *Figure 2-3* as competencies students need to have mastered or, have supports in place for, by the time the student reaches their senior year of high school. The areas include person-centered transition goals in the primary areas (post-secondary education, employment and independent living), an understanding of the law as it pertains to their disability, an understanding of their rights under the American Disabilities Act (ADA), the ability to advocate for themselves, and an understanding of their responsibility to themselves and their community. By having these needs addressed by the beginning of the student's senior year, the student can hone their skills during their senior year while still under the umbrella of their Individualize Education Plan.



*Figure 2-3 Student Competencies in the 12th Grade*

As students begin their high school experience, they need to have a solid knowledge base of diploma options and the means to advocate appropriately for themselves. They need a knowledge base that includes goal setting and goal attainment skills. They need knowledge about

themselves, their abilities and their limitations that need support. Students should enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade with some prior knowledge about the components of their IEP and its purpose. In order to participate in developing their own graduation plan, a student needs an understanding of his or her own aptitude as it relates to desired employment or potential post-secondary goals. These sub-elements of the framework are illustrated in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grade level of the framework (Figure 2-4).



*Figure 2-4 Student Competencies in the 9th ~ 11th Grades*

Continuing with the backward planning process brings us to the middle grades section of the framework. In order to enter high school ready to actively participate in their own IEP and to participate in developing their own graduation plan, students should begin to develop a sense of understanding the IEP and its process while they are working through their middle school grade levels. In order to develop this understanding, students need to participate in mock IEP activities, aptitude exploration, and targeted career exploration related to their aptitude. The targeted career exploration should be more in-depth than an overview of potential careers. During this time in



their education, students should also begin to develop appropriate self-advocacy skills and stronger goal setting abilities. Goal setting skills and activities should encompass a continuum, which includes purpose, planning, evaluating, revamping and continuing through goal attainment. These skills and concepts are exemplified in the middle grades section of the framework, (*Figure 2-5*).



*Figure 2-5 Potential student Competencies in the Middle Grades*

This brings us to the intermediate and Primary Grade Levels of the framework. In order to enter middle school ready to learn about goal setting, self-advocacy, their IEP and its process, students should be introduced to these concepts during intermediate and Primary Grades. This will allow students the opportunity to begin forming their foundational knowledge base regarding post-secondary transition (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill

& Krathwohl 1956; Burns, 2014; Kessinger, 2011; Marzano, 2011). Skills and concepts that could help students develop the prior knowledge to facilitate later success could include: self-advocacy activities, goal setting activities, career exploration, aptitude exploration, and disability exploration, celebrating success and embracing differences. These concepts are illustrated in the Intermediate and Primary Grades level sections of the framework, (*Figure 2-6*).



*Figure 2-6 Student Competencies in the Intermediate Grades*

However, these sub-levels are the ones most likely to be modified when the interview and survey data are evaluated. In order for this framework to serve practicing teachers and students to its greatest potential, the sub-elements at each level of the framework must include input from teachers with experience in each respective level.

The framework design is intended to be useful to professionals with a range of experience from beginning teachers to classroom veterans. However, in order to effectively implement transition activities at each grade level, teachers or the staff responsible for transition activities,

would benefit from knowledge regarding post-secondary transition. Having knowledge, of post-secondary transition and how developing prior knowledge foundations can affect ultimate outcomes for students, would help staff to understand the importance of the transition activities at each level.

### **Pilot Survey**

In order to determine specific teacher concerns regarding implementing transition practices in the Target District, this researcher returned to the literature to seek a vetted survey as a means to investigate teacher concerns. The teachers had expressed to the director a lack of time to incorporate transition practices effectively when students with disabilities arrived to high school with little or no understanding of post-secondary transition and how it directly affects them as students and young adults. Therefore, a survey was sought that targeted teacher concerns regarding transition implementation that specifically included elementary grade teachers.

This researcher could find no articles in the literature relating post-secondary transition of students with disabilities to a continuum addressing prior knowledge beginning in elementary school grades. There is an abundance of articles in relation to pre-service teachers, training, preparation, and post-secondary transition; but these did not include the specific parameters needed.

In an effort to meet the investigative needs for this project, the researcher sent out 27 emails to various authors seeking to communicate regarding their publications. This effort gleaned limited responses. The articles and the communiqué's of those authors who responded were reviewed. After doing so, permission was sought and obtained to use and modify the survey disseminated in association with *Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and*

*Solutions in Florida*, authored by Joyce H. Lubbers *Florida Department of Education*, Jeanne B. Repetto, *University of Florida, Gainesville*, and Susan P. McGorray *University of Florida, Gainesville* (Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008). The email granting permission to use and modify the survey can be found as exhibit E to the IRB submission.

The Lubbers, Repetto, and McGorray survey was composed of 32 questions under the categories of:

- ❖ General Information
- ❖ Vocational Services
- ❖ Parent and Student Involvement in Transition Planning
- ❖ Interagency Collaboration
- ❖ Transition Process.

The questions were composed of a mixture of open response, check all that apply lists, information seeking, likert type, and general information. The survey contained questions to address the percentage of time teachers dedicated to roles such as general academics, work experience coordination, vocational skills, and special education services. It also contained questions regarding transition training teachers had participated in and/or would like to receive. With some adjustments, the Lubbers, Repetto, and McGorray survey was modified to investigate specific implementation concerns of teachers in the target district. Additionally, questions were added to solicit suggestions from veteran teachers regarding what specific transition skills should be introduced at various grade levels.

The first modified version of the survey had 40 questions inclusive with informed consent and a thank you screen at the end. This included demographic information and skip logic questions to direct veteran teachers to targeted items. The survey contained five general information and experience questions, nine yes, no, or unsure questions that addressed resource availability, resource usability, district plans, and participant willingness to be interviewed. There was also one likert type teacher satisfaction scale related to the arrangements available for assisting students with disabilities in the district as they progress from school to adult life. To inform the development of the framework, there was one checklist for each grade category, specifically to solicit suggestions from teachers regarding introducing specific transition skills at various grade levels. The open response questions gave teachers the opportunity to share specifically what type of training they need, what barriers exist that hinder the transition process, and suggestions for improving of the transition process. A copy of the first modified survey can be found as exhibit D of the IRB submission.

In summary, collaboration, up until the point of Institutional Review Board approval, included meeting with the Exceptional Education Director of the targeted district, dialogue with colleagues in both the professional setting and the university setting regarding the literature and available data, and the use of critical friends to critique the potential survey and writings.

## **Data Collection**

### **Survey Design**

As stated earlier, permission was sought and obtained to use and modify the survey disseminated in association with *Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida*, authored by Joyce H. Lubbers *Florida Department of Education*, Jeanne B. Repetto, *University of Florida, Gainesville*, and Susan P. McGorray *University of Florida, Gainesville*

(Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008). The survey modified for this pilot study was a multi-branched, anonymous, quantitative survey with eight open-ended response questions for qualitative data. It contained thirteen General information questions, three Vocational Service Questions, three Technology Questions, eight Transition Planning Questions, four Parent and Student Involvement Questions, seven questions about Interagency Collaboration, and three open response questions on the transition process. The email granting permission to use and modify the survey can be found as exhibit E in the IRB submission.

The first modification of the survey for this research can be found as exhibit D in the IRB submission. It contained one informed consent, three general information and experience questions, and twelve questions to inform the K-12 Transition Implementation Framework, three at each of the four grade spans. There were thirteen teacher perception questions included to compare the perception of teachers in the target district with the findings of Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008, and Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010 regarding effective transition practices at the secondary level.

At the request of the Exceptional Student Education Administration in the target district, the survey included several questions to inform other concerns in addition to the information needed for this research. The total number of questions on the first modification was forty.

After receiving IRB approval for the research, the survey was put on Qualtrics for a pilot. Three administrators and five colleagues with knowledge about post-secondary transition and the target district were asked to review the survey. Due to input, it was realized that several of the questions were repetitive. Some of the information requested by Exceptional Student Education Administration had already been covered by questions included from Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray's original work. Due to the suggestions from the feedback from the pilot

administration, the repetitive questions were removed and some typographical errors were corrected. The final survey contained nineteen questions including the informed consent. The final version of the survey used for this project can be seen as appendix E beginning on page 211.

It contained one informed consent, three general information and experience questions, and twelve questions to inform the K-12 Transition Implementation Framework, three at each of the four grade spans. Two questions were included to recruit volunteers for potential interviews. There were three teacher perception questions included to compare the perception of teachers in the target district with the findings of Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008, and Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010 regarding effective transition practices at the secondary level.

At the request of the Exceptional Student Education Administration in the target district, the survey included seven questions to inform her concerns, in addition to the information needed for this research. The total number of questions on the second modification was twenty six, including the informed consent. As questions were not added, only deleted, additional IRB approval was not requested.

### **Sample Methods**

In order to determine teacher perceptions regarding post-secondary transition practices in the target district, and to inform the final design of the framework, data was collected via an anonymous survey through Qualtrics. A stratified sampling of all of the teachers (741) in the target district was sought. For the purpose of informing the K-12 Transition Framework, the teachers were partitioned into groups by grade levels through the use of the skip logic function in Qualtrics. This will be explained in detail below.

Participants were recruited via email invitation, which contained a hyperlink to the web-based survey. An email containing consent information and the hyperlink to the survey was sent to all sixteen building principals in the district on March 23, 2016. The email requested they forward the invitation to their staff. To increase the rate of response, a follow-up email invitation, which also contained the hyperlink and consent information, was sent directly to all 741 teachers in all of the schools in the district on April 6, 2016. A reminder email with an expression of thanks was sent directly to 740 teachers at each school on April 20, 2016. On May 2, 2016, a final email reminder with a thank you expression was sent directly to 740 teachers in the district. In this final email, it was expressed to all teachers how important their opinions were to the research. Conversations in the community led the researcher to believe that elementary teachers did not feel their input was needed. Due to this information, a special entreat was made to the teachers at the elementary level in the May 2<sup>nd</sup> reminder email. The survey closed on May 5, 2016. This provided a survey window of six calendar weeks; however, the district was on Spring Break for six workdays during this period.

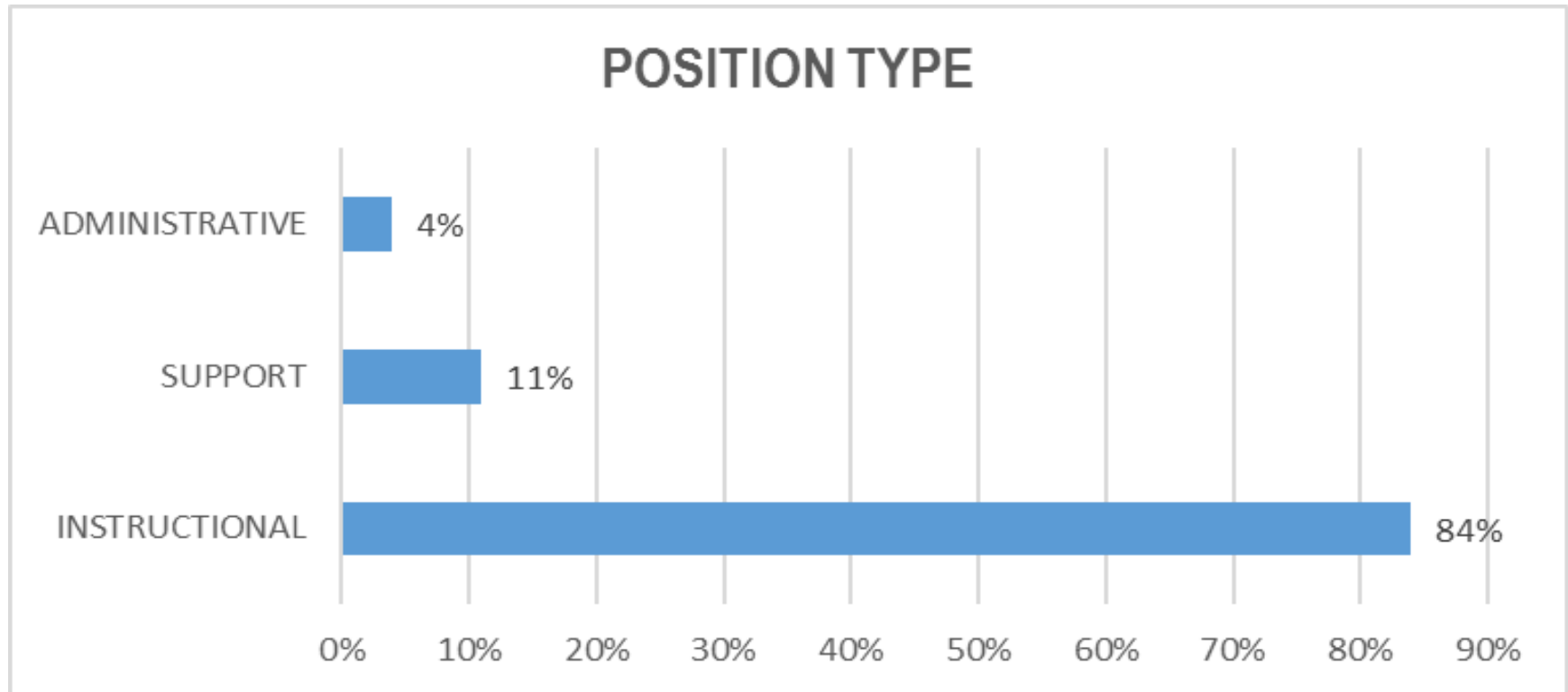
The hyperlink on the email was designed so that anyone with internet access could participate in the survey; however, the skip-logic embedded in the survey (Qualtrics, n.d.) created several branches to facilitate the efficacy of data collection. The first branch in the survey directed classroom teachers to questions requested by the district and research related questions, after demographic and job descriptive information. Other participants were directed to the “thank you” screen after providing demographic and job descriptive information. The second branch in the survey aggregated teachers by the grade spans of high school (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>), middle school (6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>), intermediate grades (3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>) and primary grades (K – 2<sup>nd</sup>). The third and final branch in the survey directed teachers with four or more years of experience, at any of the given



grade spans, to a question about the grade span in which they self-reported experience. These questions were in the form of a checklist of transition skills that could be taught at the grade span. The opinions of these veteran teachers were collected to inform the development of the K-12 Transition Implementation Framework.

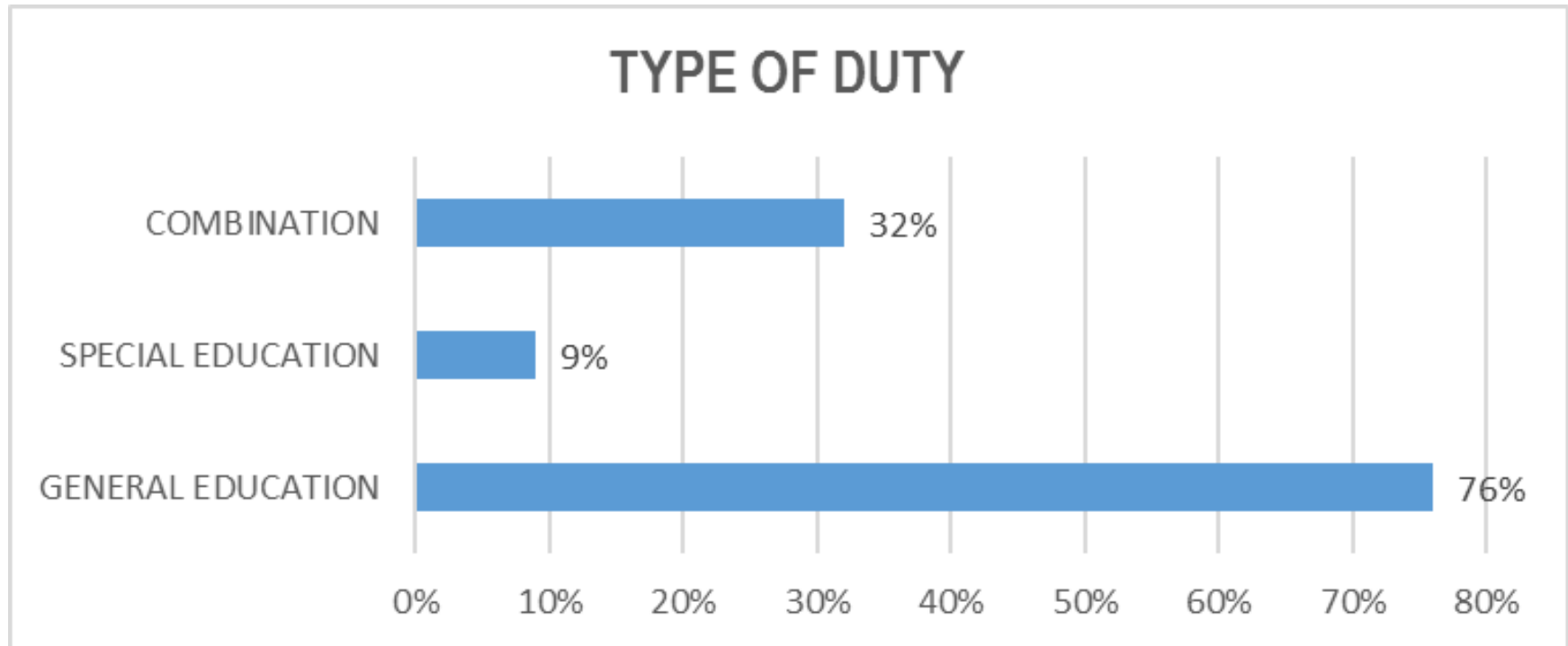
### **Response Rate**

The survey had two hundred eighty-nine participants. However, not all participants responded to every question. Two hundred fifty-eight participants responded to the first demographic question. “Which best describes your duties?” This question revealed that 84% (218) of the participants identified themselves as instructional staff, 11% (29) as support staff, and 4% (11) of the respondents identified as administrative. Figure 2-7 below provides a visual depiction of this information.



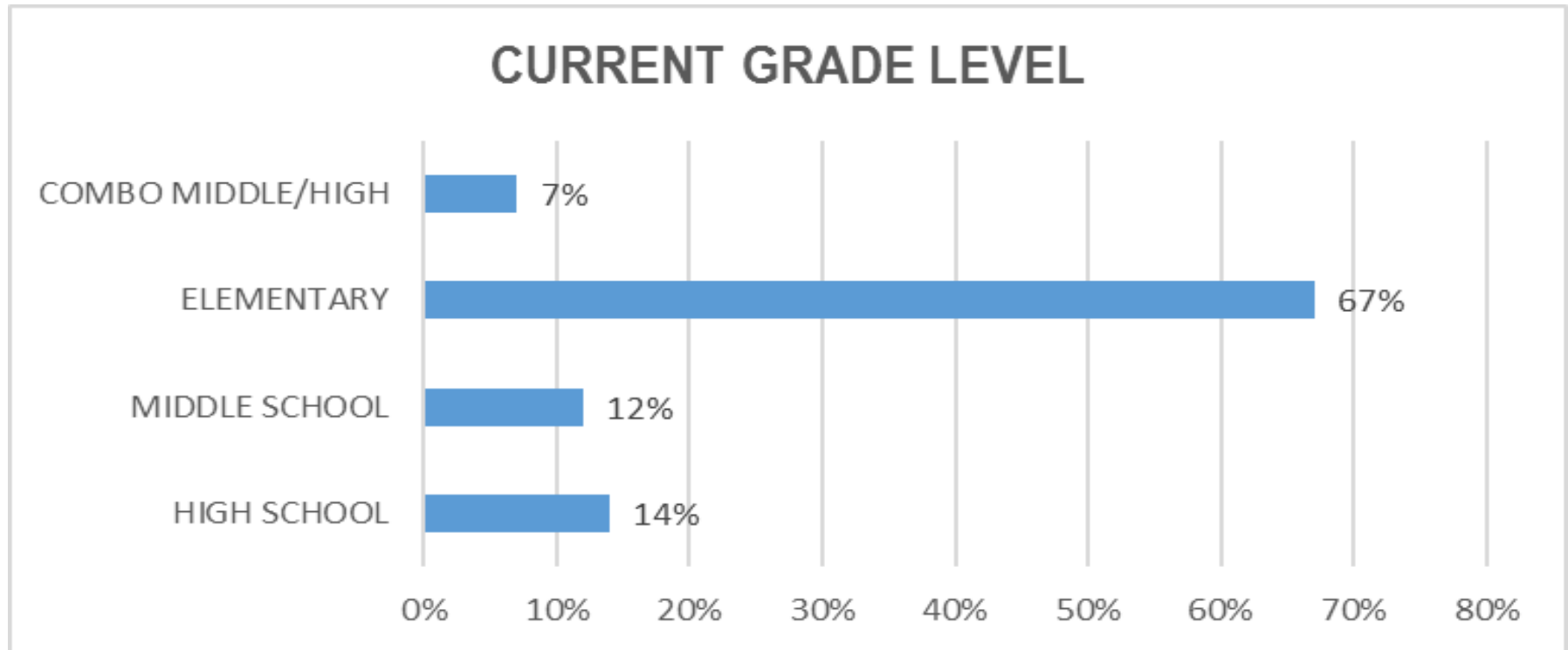
*Figure 2-7 Participants Classification*

Two hundred seventeen participants responded to the second demographic question. “Which best describes your duties?” This question revealed that 76% (165) of the participants identified themselves as General Education, 9% (20) as Special Education, and 15% (32) of the respondents identified themselves as a combination of both. Figure 2-8 below provides a visual depiction of this information.



*Figure 2-8 Participants Designation*

The third demographic question asked participants to classify themselves according to school/grade affiliation. Two hundred seventeen participants responded to this demographic question. “What grade level applies to your current professional situation?” This question revealed that 14% (30) identified as high school only, 12% (26) as middle school only, 67% (145) as elementary only, and 7% (16) as a combination of high school/middle school. Figure 2-9 below provides a visual depiction of this information.



*Figure 2-9 Participants current school assignment*

## **Survey Results**

### **Information for the Director of Exceptional Student Education**

As mentioned earlier, several questions on the survey were included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Education. She wanted them included to provide information regarding: professional development, curricular supports teachers felt would assist in supporting student transition needs, barriers teachers perceived to implementing transition skills, and what would help teachers implement teaching transition skills.

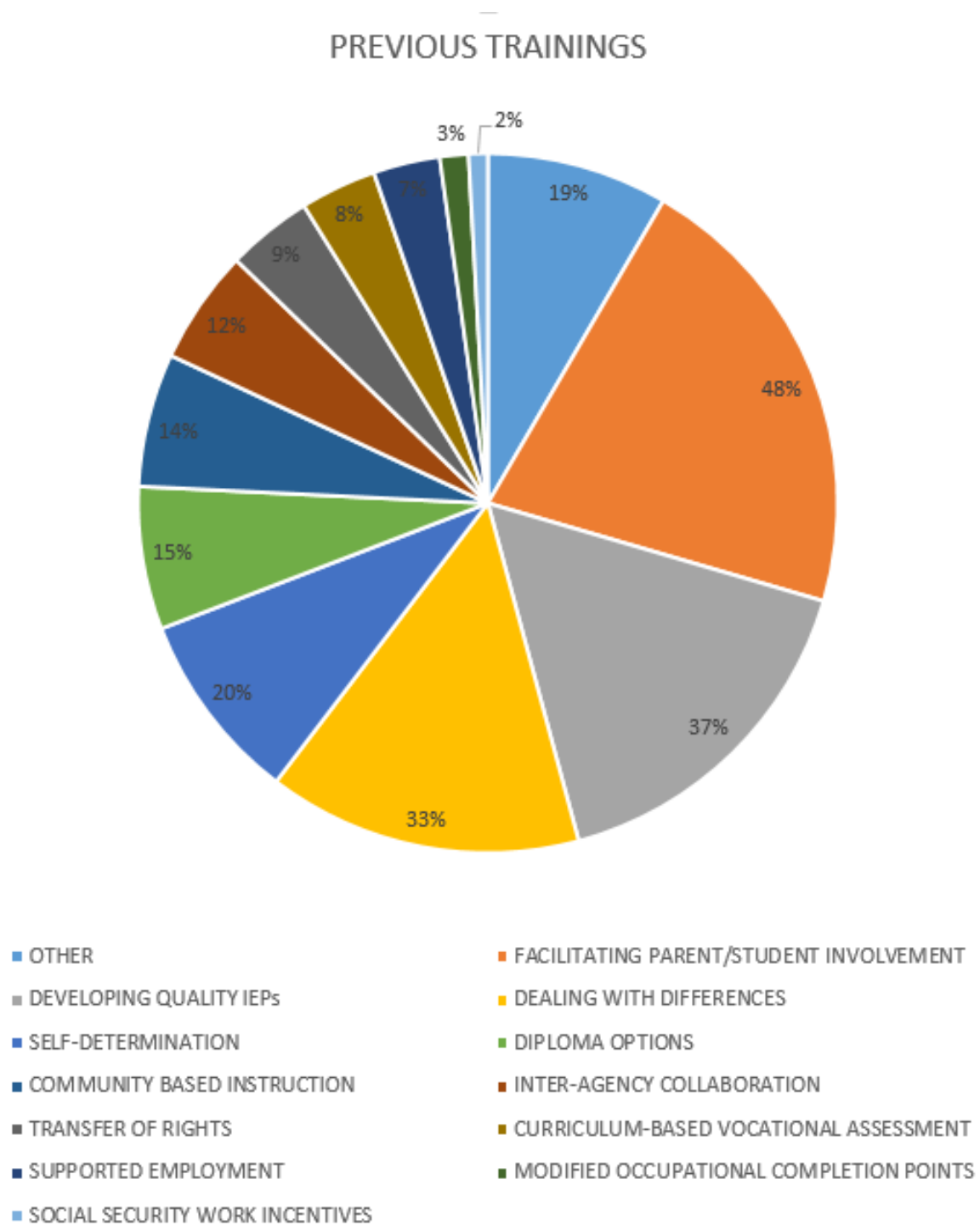
The director wished to be informed of what trainings, related to transition skills, teachers had already participated in and what trainings they would like to receive. One hundred five teachers responded to the question regarding training received. Teacher responses can be viewed in Table 2-1 on page 64.

*Table 2-1 Previous Trainings*

Self-determination	21	20%
Developing Quality Transition IEP's	39	37%
Modified Occupational Completion Points	3	3%
Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment	8	8%
Supported Employment	7	7%
Community Based Instruction	15	14%
Inter-agency Collaboration	13	12%
Dealing with Differences	35	33%
Social Security Work Incentives	2	2%
Diploma Options	16	15%
Self-determination	21	20%
Developing Quality Transition IEP's	39	37%
Modified Occupational Completion Points	3	3%
Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment	8	8%
Supported Employment	7	7%
Community Based Instruction	15	14%
Inter-agency Collaboration	13	12%
Dealing with Differences	35	33%
Social Security Work Incentives	2	2%
Diploma Options	16	15%
Transfer of Rights	9	9%
Facilitating Parent/Student Involvement	50	48%
listed other trainings in the open response section	20	19%



The trainings listed in the open response section included: Champs, Project 10, LCCE, and an online PDA Positive Behavior Support/Teaching Students with Disabilities. Figure 2-10 below provides a visual of this information.



*Figure 2-10 Previous trainings*

The director also wished to be informed of what professional development teachers would like to receive. One hundred fifty nine teachers responded to the question, “What transition training would you like to receive? Select all that apply.” Responses to this question indicated that all of the areas suggested were desirable to at least some teachers. The two areas that stood out were, “Dealing with Differences” and “Career development/planning for students with disabilities.” Teachers who chose to write in a special request in the open response section asked for training in Project 10, LCCE, and CHAMPS. Figure 2-11 below provides a visual of the responses to this question.

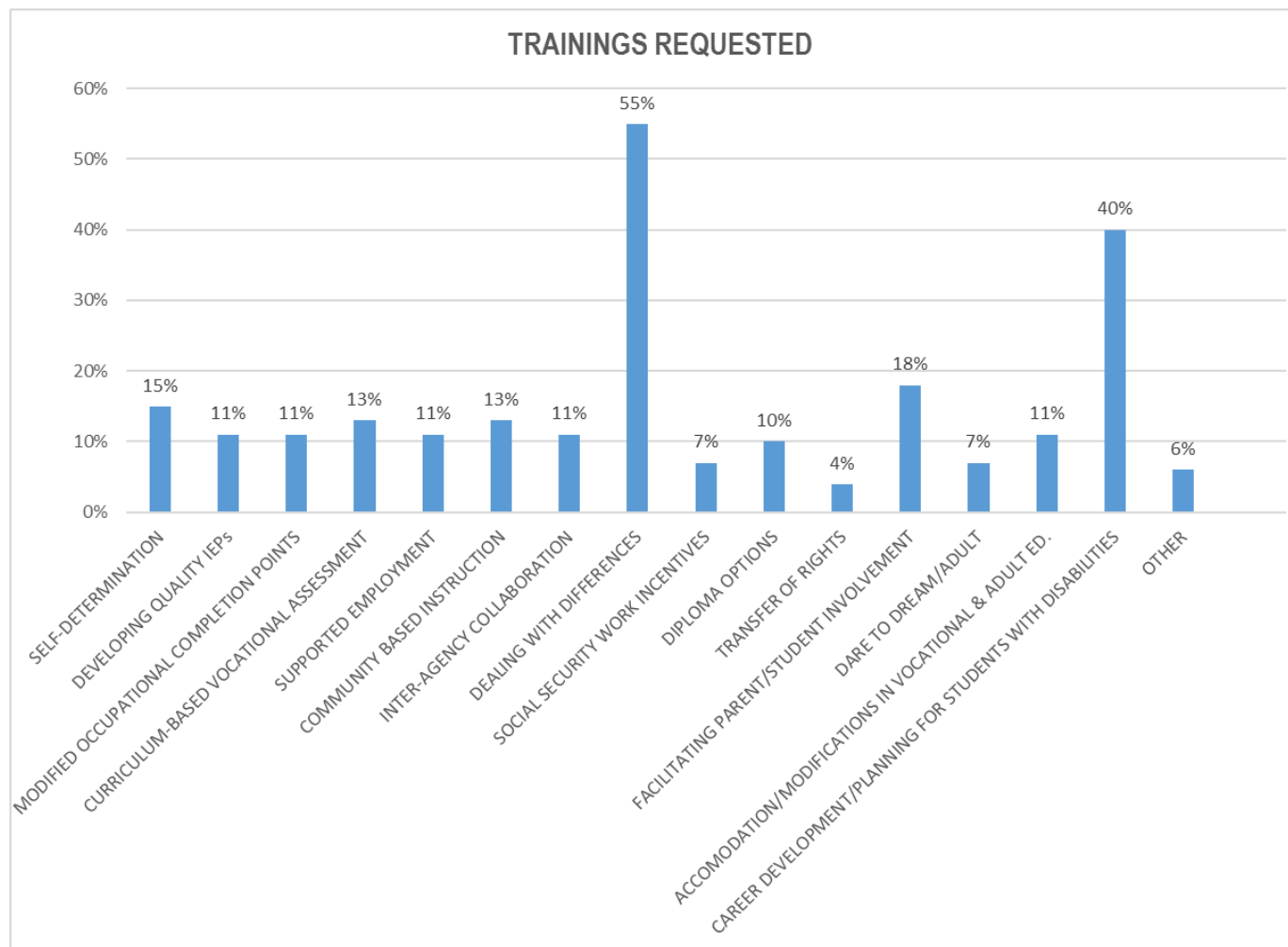


Figure 2-11 Teacher Requested Trainings

Another question included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Education was, “What would help you implement teaching transition skills?” This was an open response question and sixty teachers responded. The responses were transcribed verbatim, coded, and themed for the director’s convenience. The theme most prevalent throughout the responses for this question was that of time, with twenty-eight teachers (47%) including it as one of their first three needs. The second most prevalent concern was that of training, with eighteen teachers (30%) listing it as one of their first three needs. Three additional categories were resources (13%), communication (3%) and other (see responses). Teacher responses, with coded themes can be viewed in Table 2-2 below.

Table 2-2 Teacher responses regarding what would help implement teaching transition skills, coded and themed

What would help you implement teaching transition skills?			
Having knowledge of student accommodations is very useful when planning to teach transitional skills.	COMMUNICATION		
curriculum and more time	RESOURCES	TIME	
materials and training	RESOURCES	TRAINING	
Allocation of money	RESOURCES		
More age-appropriate resources.	RESOURCES		
More resources, more worksheets, student books and workbooks	RESOURCES		
more time with the student(s) and positive atmosphere	TIME	CLIMATE	
more time less paperwork	TIME	PAPER WORK	
Time, resources, opportunity to learn in real setting, professional development with increased opportunity to collaborate across grade levels, etc.	TIME	RESOURCES	TRAINING
More times, resources, opportunities to participate in training.	TIME	RESOURCES	
Time and training	TIME	TRAINING	
can't do anything else!!!	TIME		
I can't do anything else	TIME		
I can't take on anything else.	TIME		
Either more time or less required benchmarks.	TIME		
May be more time to devote to helping student talk about transitional skills.	TIME		
more time	TIME		
more time	TIME		
more time	TIME		
more time	TIME		
More time	TIME		
More time and experienced &strained staff.	TIME		

more time with students who are not in your classes and availability of assistance from other students and paraprofessionals	TIME	
Not enough time	TIME	
Relaxed curriculum requirements (directly related to testing), which would provide time for these important life activities.	TIME	
There is not time to add anything else. Have a class or a workshop for the students if you want to add something.	TIME	
Less testing More one-on-one help with the students Less testing Life skill based activity supplies Less testing Exposure to those students who have successfully transitioned for role models Less testing	TIME	
More people. Smaller class sizes.	TIME	
Teacher aid, specific training	TIME	
Trained assistance in the classroom or much smaller class size.	TIME	
More time; additional training that includes models that work and key elements needed to teach transition skills	TIME	TRAINING
Training. Being able to sit in on IEP meetings. Only 1 academic teacher gets called to annual IEP evaluations and if we all sat in on this meeting (once again time being the factor) we regular ed teachers might have more understanding of the needs and disabilities of that student.	TRAINING	COMMUNICATION
more training and resources available.	TRAINING	RESOURCES
Training and time	TRAINING	TIME
training, guidelines, time	TRAINING	TIME
Hands-on example training!!!!	TRAINING	
Knowing what the transition skills are.	TRAINING	
More information and classes to teach teachers	TRAINING	
Professional Development	TRAINING	
Training	TRAINING	
Training	TRAINING	

Training	TRAINING
training.	TRAINING
Yes, if I am trained explicitly first.	TRAINING
In service training	TRAINING
Idk	OTHER
No	OTHER
A small group	OTHER
A specific class period set aside for such activities.	OTHER
Focused performance activities	OTHER
full time aid	OTHER
having a person qualified to teach these skills in my classroom occasionally	OTHER
How do you fix don't care.	OTHER
<p>Sorry, I'm retiring after 40 years. I was a vocational teacher for the handicap for 11 years. Since switching to regular education I have had a number of students with disabilities come onto my classes. The biggest problem is class size. when you have 25 to 27 or more other students (and they have a wide-range of needs too) and then a disabled student, that disabled student doesn't want to be singled out. Trying to work with them (when you're the only one) is hard. The ESE staff that are to work with some of the disabled students only work with a certain few. If you are putting a student in a class with an IEP, they should be monitored. I have one student that has missed over 50 days of school. You would think the ESE teachers or ESE consultative teacher would keep up with them as well, it's not just the classroom teacher's job on this student. You can't teach someone when they are not here and they're not being encouraged to be here. More people for a student to confer with when they have problems. Better efforts by the school system to train other students that ALL people are different and ALL people should be treated with respect. I am so tired of bullying and the lack of administrators concern about it. There are laws against bullying and they need to be followed.</p>	
	OTHER



Another teacher question included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Services was, “What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?” This was an open response question and fifty-two teachers responded. The responses were transcribed verbatim, coded, and themed for the director’s convenience. The theme most prevalent throughout the responses for this question was again that of time, or the lack thereof. Teachers’ responses revealed twenty-one teachers, (40%) included some reference to a lack of time as one of the first three barriers to the transition process. The second most prevalent stand-alone concern was that of communication with ten teachers, (19%) listing it as a barrier to the transition process. The third most prevalent stand-alone concern shared by teachers under this question was that of parent involvement with eight teachers, (15%) listing parent involvement as a barrier to the transition process. Climate (12%), agency involvement (4%), and training (13%) all stood out as individual barriers. Teachers also expressed comments related to funding, resources, support, and opportunity that appear to be related. These comments, grouped together as one related theme totaled twenty-nine references, (56%). Teacher responses with coded themes are listed in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3 Teacher responses regarding barriers that hinder the transition process coded and themed

What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?			
attendance and parental involvement	ATTENDANCE	PARENT INVOLVEMENT	
not a priority	CLIMATE		
Students who are intolerant of others.	CLIMATE		
Teachers' perceptions that Inclusion is too much work on the teacher.	CLIMATE		
lack of information being given out; not informing all teachers of programs for various students; agencies not having time to be involved; parents who don't care.	COMMUNICATION	AGENCY INVOLVEMENT	PARENT INVOLVEMENT
Additional communication can be needed at times.	COMMUNICATION		
I would think scheduling to get all parties present.	COMMUNICATION		
Lousy communication	COMMUNICATION		
Many parents and students do not know all the services and options that are \available to them.	COMMUNICATION		
Non-communication	COMMUNICATION		
The main barrier is communication. The parents, school and student need to have regular progress evaluations.	COMMUNICATION		
When transition is not promoted and students/parents receive nothing due to uninformed, uncaring, and/or untrained teachers and support personnel.	COMMUNICATION		
Lack of funding/staff	FUNDING	STAFF	
Home environment and support outside the school. Lack of concern by people in the workforce or lack of patience in assisting in the transition process	HOME	OPPORTUNITY	PATIENCE
not know what they are and where to get help	KNOWLEDGE		
Money to allow for gradual release, people trained to help in the transition process AND who are given the time to help in transitions.	MONEY	STAFF	TIME

\$, adequate training, enough staff to implement	MONEY	TRAINING	STAFF
Not aware of any.	NONE		
Lack of opportunities in small, rural areas for work and life experiences. Lack of dedicated resources, such as effective voc rehab counselors and transition specialists.	OPPORTUNITY	RESOURCES	
Opportunity	OPPORTUNITY		
Parental opposition, especially if the parent/caretaker will not discuss feelings, fears etc. honestly with staff assisting in transition. If student is to be employed, transportation is always a problem. Basic living skills need to be in place if student is to be living independently. Maintaining the home, cooking, laundry, personal hygiene, paying bills, etc. Early in transition process the student can experience fear, regret, disappointment and needs staff to assist through this process.	PARENT INVOLVEMENT	TRANSPORTATION	SUPPORT
Lack of parent involvement	PARENT INVOLVEMENT		
Lack of participation from parents and agencies.	PARENT INVOLVEMENT		
Parent lack of education	PARENT INVOLVEMENT		
Parental involvement in the child's education is the major one for our area (which is high poverty). There is an assumption/expectation that the government will/should do X amount. Getting the student to become a self-starter or self-advocate in their own future when their parent(s) is not setting that type of example is an enormous obstacle to overcome...if possible.	PARENT INVOLVEMENT		
Some times, monies are allocated to students with disabilities and rather than risk that money leaving the household; some parents/guardians hinder the transition process.	PARENT INVOLVEMENT		
Preconceived ideas about students.	PREJUDICE		
self esteem	SELF ESTEEM		

Consistent support in the classroom from paraprofessionals.	STAFF	COMMUNICATION	
Communication			
personnel resources and time; student limitation of their abilities.	STAFF	TIME	
No help with inclusion students	STAFF		
Not enough staff	STAFF		
Lack of support in the new setting			
(adequate enough to support the child in the change).	SUPPORT		
Students receive a lot less support when they leave elementary and move on to middle/high school.	SUPPORT		
Support at the secondary level.	SUPPORT		
the same as mentioned before - time and understanding of disabilities.			
These students have a teacher who is over their IEP but I can tell you I've only been asked about my 8 students 1 time this entire school year and that was in October. I'm not sure how this helps the student when their consultative teacher is not involved in my classroom and their success or lack their of.	TIME	COMMUNICATION	
Lack of time, resources, Money	TIME	RESOURCES	MONEY
time, resources, Money	TIME	RESOURCES	MONEY
time , resources, help..	TIME	RESOURCES	STAFF
Time & resources	TIME	RESOURCES	
time, resources	TIME	RESOURCES	
time, resources	TIME	RESOURCES	
Lack of time and personnel	TIME	STAFF	
Time/Trained People	TIME	STAFF	
Not enough time/support.	TIME	SUPPORT	
Time and lack of awareness of resources	TIME	TRAINING	
lack of time	TIME		
Lack of time to attend meetings.	TIME		
Not enough time and too much testing	TIME		

teacher do not have enough plan time	TIME
Time	TIME
TIME	TIME
Time and lack of focus due to being diluted through the day with six different preps	TIME
To much testing adversely affects all students not just those with disabilities.	TIME
Lack of knowledge and training in helping students through transition	TRAINING
lack of training	TRAINING
lacking of training.	TRAINING
My lack of knowledge of what happens after the students leave my school; I don't know enough about what happens next.	TRAINING
Training a	TRAINING
I do not know.	IDK
Idk	IDK
Unknown	IDK
do not know	IDK
X	NONE
not familiar with barriers in transition process	NONE
not sure	NONE
Not sure.	NONE
Unsure	NONE

Another question included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Services was, “What curricular supports would assist you in supporting student transition needs?” This was an open response question and fifty-four teachers responded. The responses were transcribed verbatim, coded, and themed for the director’s convenience. The themes that arose from teacher responses were as follows: Nine teachers (17%) included some reference to training as one of their top three suggestions, seven teachers (13%) included differentiation, six teachers (11%) included staff, four teachers (7%) included technology, three teachers (6%) included content, and three teachers (6%) included resources. Two teachers recommended a transition type class be made available to “all” students. This was of particular interest to the researcher, as the benefit of inclusive settings for students with disabilities is common knowledge among educational professionals. One of the teacher’s, who suggested an inclusive transition class, input is included here.

“In my opinion, all students should have courses available that will help prepare them for adult life. I think courses in social skills (manners), appropriate work expectations, financial planning, medical/insurance information and planning, and the importance of being a productive member of society. Students should be taught skills for being a responsible adult, and for those with disabilities, to be able to achieve the highest degree of personal care and responsibility to help them feel successful as they strive to improve themselves. In these cases, minor accomplishments should be celebrated.”

Teacher responses to this question, with coded themes can be viewed in Table 2-4 below.

Table 2-4 Teacher responses regarding curricular supports

What curricular supports would assist you in supporting student transition needs?	
In my opinion, all students should have courses available that will help prepare them for adult life. I think courses in social skills (manners), appropriate work expectations, financial planning, medical/insurance information and planning, and the importance of being a productive member of society. Students should be taught skills for being a responsible adult, and for those with disabilities, to be able to achieve the highest degree of personal care and responsibility to help them feel successful as they strive to improve themselves. In these cases, minor accomplishments should be celebrated.	ALL STUDENTS
Make this transitioning a class which could be offered to all students. Ideally it would be productive with reg ed students and students with differences present.	ALL STUDENTS
Understanding their disabilities and not just be given an IEP sheet (several weeks into the school year) that says I have to give them extended time on everything. Most of us regular ed teachers were never trained to deal with special needs students and we feel overwhelmed.	COMMUNICATION
content area (mathematics)	CONTENT
English Language Arts and Math proficiency	CONTENT
ESE Dept. and Guidance	CONTENT

Materials specifically designed for the different functioning levels of the students. Years ago there was "Dare to Dream." It may still be in existence but it was a good, general tool for most students. Would be helpful to have access to such materials for our non-readers, etc.	DIFFERENTIATION	RESOURCES
differentiating instruction, especially with emphasis that this is best practice for all learners.	DIFFERENTIATION	
I dependent goal setting, grade appropriate skills	DIFFERENTIATION	
Materials that explain the process to the students in a way they understand.	DIFFERENTIATION	
That would depend on the needs of each particular student.	DIFFERENTIATION	
To have a good transition curriculum for students of all academic levels.	DIFFERENTIATION	
Charm school. Manners. Basic courtesy. Anger management. Money management. Negotiating skills. Asking for help when needed. Reward independent thinking and behavior instead of encouraging attention-seeking. Put students in situations where they are allowed to experience failure and learn from it.	EXPERITIAL	
More workbooks and teacher manual to use	RESOURCES	
more effective scheduling with support personnel that are transitioning students.	SCHEDULING	STAFF
Collaborative learning. Inclusion teachers and paras to supplement the classroom teacher.	STAFF	
Community/school liaisons with appropriate agencies and businesses	STAFF	
More support facilitation for students.	STAFF	
Student Care Attendants	STAFF	
Tutors, mentors, resource books	STAFF	
More technology time to assist in securing computer skills	TECHNOLOGY	



Something that could be done online. This way the info could be shared across platforms, partialed out as requested, follow the student as they progress through their educational career and even show their possible development, and it would be the easiest to track.	TECHNOLOGY	
Teacher friendly curriculum with real training Technology available to students and teachers.	TECHNOLOGY TECHNOLOGY	
time; being able to adapt curriculum more (one guidance counselor says they don't have the time to modify. If the teacher is willing to help modify and write down those modifications and to discuss it with the parent, why can't modifications be made?	TIME	DIFFERENTIATION
time, resources \$, training, Staff Knowing what is expected from them at the next level. Knowing what skills and standards are expected in the next level. knowing what to do	TIME TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING	RESOURCES
Not working in a classroom setting at this time, but I feel in-service at the school site and teachers having a chance to visit in these classrooms would give support	TRAINING	
Training Training Training on student needs	TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING	
Training, real training not where you feel you are being rushed through where they can say you have been trained.	TRAINING	
All and any available that is sound and easy to implement.		
Making the transition process more relevant on the IEP		
I'm not sure with the CORE curriculum		
do not know		
dont know		

Don't know  
don't know  
I don't know  
I don't know  
Idk  
i'm not sure  
No sure  
Not Sure  
not sure  
Not sure.  
Unknown  
IDK  
Idk  
No comment  
Ahargh  
XXXX

The last question for teachers, included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Services was, “What suggestions do you have for improvement of the transition process?” This was an open response question and fifty-eight teachers responded. The responses were transcribed verbatim, coded, and themed for the director’s convenience. The theme most prevalent throughout teacher responses for this question was a recommendation for more effective training. Eleven teachers (19%) included some recommendation for training or professional development. Ten teachers (17%) recommended specific staff and/or more staff. Nine teachers (16%) recommended communication, or more effective communication. Other recommendations were related to climate six teachers (10%), time six teachers (10%), resources four teachers (6%), home/parent, support, and money. The recommendation to provide training on transitioning to adult life to all students was reiterated in the responses to this question. Verbatim teacher responses, with coded themes can be viewed in Table 2-5 below.

Table 2-5 Teacher suggestions for improving the transition process

What suggestions do you have for improvement of the transition process?			
All students need training on “transitioning” to adult life, not just those with disabilities. Students need to learn about budgeting, insurance, finding a job, taxes and other responsibilities. Maybe if we did not have so much testing we could make time to teach students what they are going to need in real life.	ALL STUDENTS		
Course work during high school that teaches the aspects of special needs people and require volunteer hours to work directly with special needs children	CLIMATE		
It's not more money. It's going to need to be a cultural shift and that is bigger than an educational system.	CLIMATE		
Our school's eight grade ESE inclusion teacher provides most transition services at this time. However, these services should be made paramount.	CLIMATE		
Transition is not a priority in this county	CLIMATE		
More information given to all so they can be informed & work with whoever is in charge of transitioning of students; someone to actually head up a county transition team to make sure these students are being properly helped and transitioning into the community. Follow-up on the student by someone even AFTER they have graduated. Positive reinforcement for the students.	COMMUNICATION	STAFF	SUPPORT

Have a bridge between the environment the student is transitioning from and the environment that the student is transitioning to. For example, in transitioning from elementary to middle school, since students are going from an environment where they have been nurtured for a time period of up to 6 years, set up your 6th grade teams so that students only have 2 core content teachers and travel to classes as a group. This way the same two teachers share the same students. And also have an administrator designated specifically for 6th grade. This will allow for relationships to be built between staff members, students, and their families. Steady, stable relationships are important for students experiencing transitions.	COMMUNICATION	SUPPORT	CLIMATE
Communication and time to explore options.	COMMUNICATION	TIME	
better communication	COMMUNICATION		
Communication between schools. Address expectations of secondary before transition	COMMUNICATION		
Meetings with ALL team members from both schools!	COMMUNICATION		
Monthly conferences to discuss the progress	COMMUNICATION		
open communication	COMMUNICATION		

Better program for consultative students. I believe our TMH and EMH students who are self contained have an excellent program at FWHS - but our consultative program is not working for the student, teacher or parent. When a student is in a class of 25 and has an IEP and they won't self-advocate - I'm left frustrated and parents are furious because their child is lacking success. It's a lose-lose situation. I'm supposed to be a mind reader when they are struggling according to parents. The consultation teachers have had no input as to how I can help them be more successful in my classroom and so the child sits in my room, failing - and neither one of us know what to do to fix it. I'm supposed to bend over backwards for a student with an IEP - but how can I help those who refuse to help themselves? This is not the case with most IEP students - but the ones who fall under this category - I feel like I've failed them with no solution in sight.	CONSULT	COMMUNICATION	
Being able to go into the homes more	home		
see previous questions answer. need \$, training, Staff	MONEY	TRAINING	STAFF
Try educating the parents on the importance of attending meetings held on their children.	PARENTS		
We must continue to try to get parents involved no matter how hard we must work	PARENTS		
We need a clear cut, step-by-step transition process.	PROCESS		
Have the correct personnel in positions to help correct this problem. Do not just push the students through the process just to say it has been completed.	STAFF	CLIMATE	
District support staff who can help with the transition process full time.	STAFF		
Hire more support facilitation for ESE students.	STAFF		

Just as there are staffing specialists assigned to schools there should be transition specialists or voc rehab counselors assigned that regularly meet with the students on an individual and group basis. The teachers include a lot of transition activities in the classroom but often students are more attentive when it isn't someone they see on the daily.	STAFF		
Support/aid full-time	STAFF		
A structured approach that is county wide policy with support personnel to facilitate.	PROCESS		
If the parent/guardian is the hindrance, one solution is to edify the student so that s/he know his/her self worth; and wants to be more....	SUPPORT		
More internet research	TECHNOLOGY		
time, resources, Money	TIME	RESOURCES	MONEY
Time/Trained People	TIME	STAFF	
Increased time and effort to collaborate with professionals that have effective experience and proven methods for teaching/facilitating transition services that work. Create or provide curriculum that works and is easy incorporate into current practices.	TIME	TRAINING	RESOURCES
Focus and time to craft effective and efficient performance skills	TIME		
More time is needed if we are to help students	TIME		
Continue state mandated requirements, train teachers and support staff, ensure supports and materials are readily available for use with students and parents.	TRAINING	RESOURCES	
We need to provide training, qualified personnel to aide teachers, and provide resources for teachers.	TRAINING	STAFF	RESOURCES
more training	TRAINING		
Ongoing PD in differentiating instruction. Book studies that address attitudes, like the Mindset series. Team building practice among students as well as faculty and staff. Building a strong community at the school.	TRAINING		

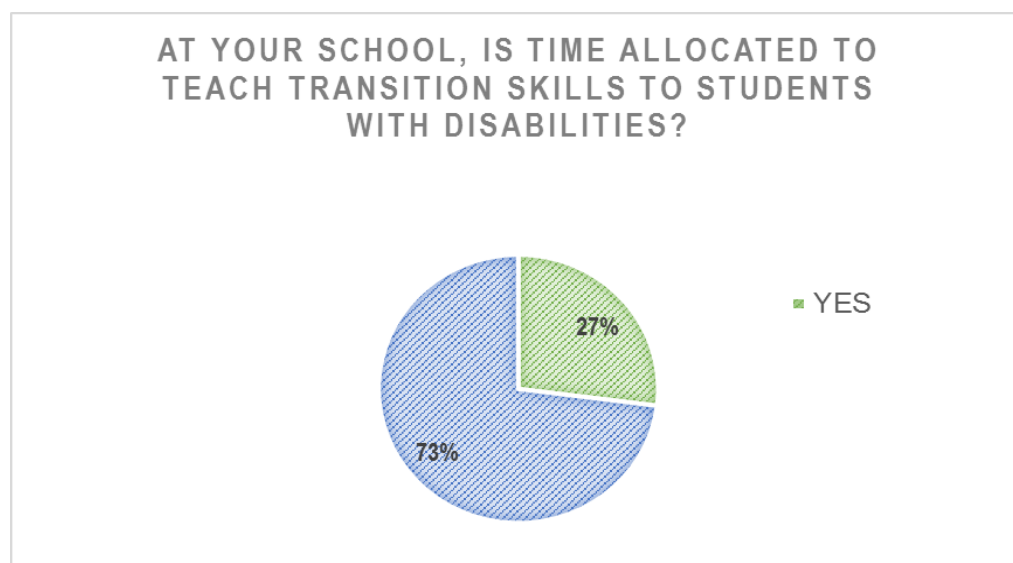
Teach us more about what options are available for our SWD's so we can better help prepare them (not just academically) for where they are going.	TRAINING	
Training	TRAINING	
Training	TRAINING	
Training and opportunities to view effective programs	TRAINING	
Training for teachers at elementary level	TRAINING	
I do not have any suggestions since I have no role in the process.		
I don't know what services are available for the students in our area. The student needs support, and someone available to advise, listen, correct if needed.	SUPPORT	STAFF
NA		
None		
None		
None		
None		
none to express at this time		
Not familiar enough with the process after 7th grade.		
not sure		
Not sure.		
Unsure		
Unsure....		
X		
Zdfhdfgj		
?		



### Comparing Perceptions in the Target District to Previous Findings in the Literature

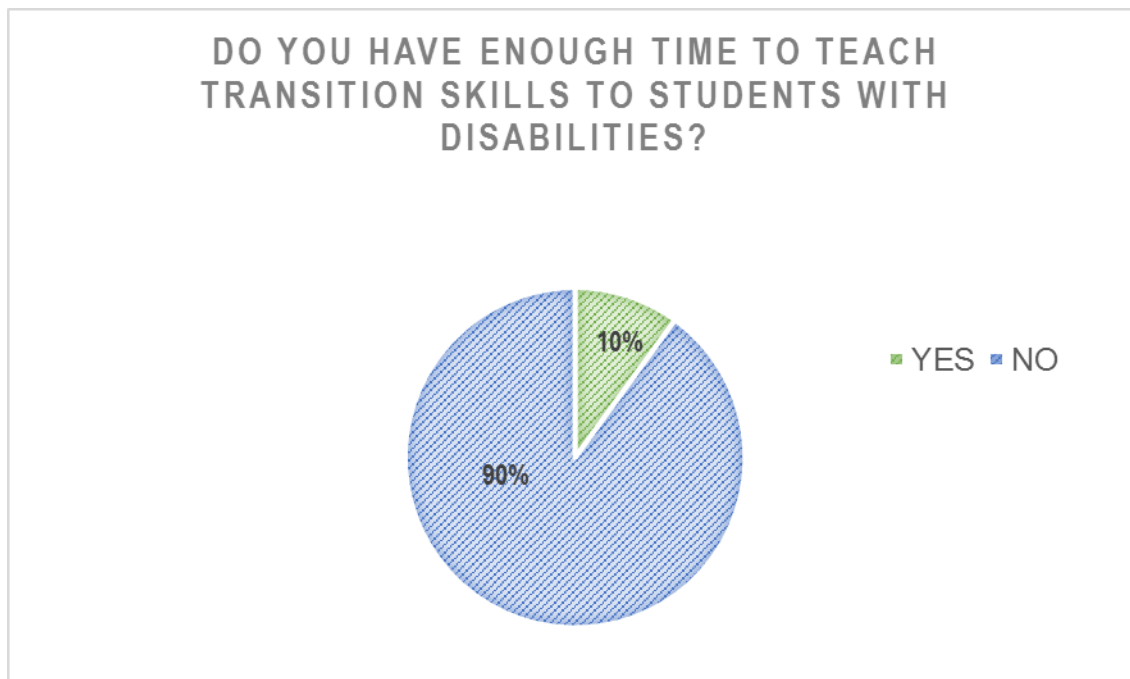
The literature indicates a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level due to teacher's lack of time, knowledge and competence to provide transition service to students with disabilities (Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008; Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010). The questions in this section were included to compare teacher perceptions in the target district to these findings in the literature.

The question, "At your school, is time allocated to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?" garnered one hundred eighty-four teacher responses. Forty-nine, (27%) of the teachers responded "yes" and one hundred thirty-five, (73%) responded "no." Data collected in connection with this question corresponds to the findings in the literature that transition practices at the secondary level are adversely effected by teacher perceptions of lack of time. Below in figure 2-12 the reader can find visual representation of this question below.



*Figure 2-12 Teacher responses regarding time being allocated to teach transition skills*

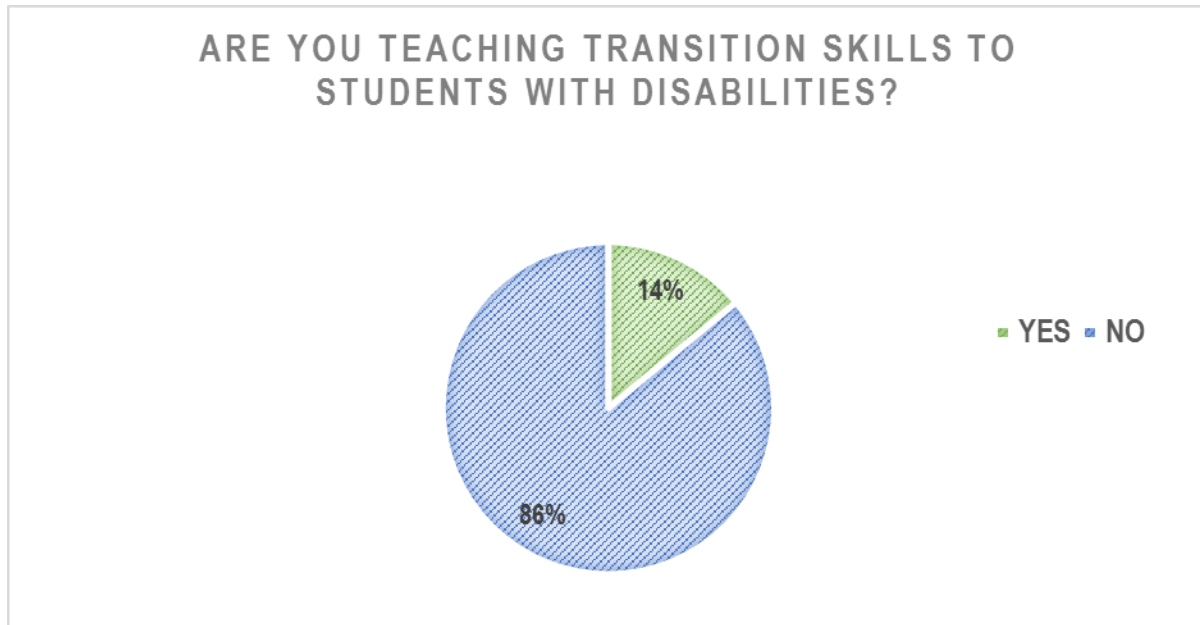
The question, “Do you have enough time to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?” accrued one hundred seventy-eight teacher responses. Seventeen, (10%) of the teachers responded “yes” and one hundred sixty-one, (90%) responded “no.” Teacher perceptions data collected in connection with this question corresponds to the findings in the literature that transition practices at the secondary level are adversely effected by a lack of time to teach transition skills. Below in figure 2-13 the reader can find visual representation of this question.



*Figure 2-13 Teacher responses regarding having enough time to teach transition skills*

“Are you teaching transition skills to students with disabilities?” was the last question in this section. It accrued one hundred seventy-eight responses from teachers in the target district.

Twenty-five, (14%) of the teachers responded “yes” and one hundred fifty-three, (86%) responded “no.” Below in figure 2-14 the reader can find visual representation of this question.



*Figure 2-14 Responses to “Are you teaching transition skills to students with disabilities?”*

Teacher responses to the questions in this section, and the data collected correspond to the 2008 findings of Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, and the 2010 postulations of Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak regarding a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level.

### **Data to Inform the Finalization of the K-12 Transition Framework**

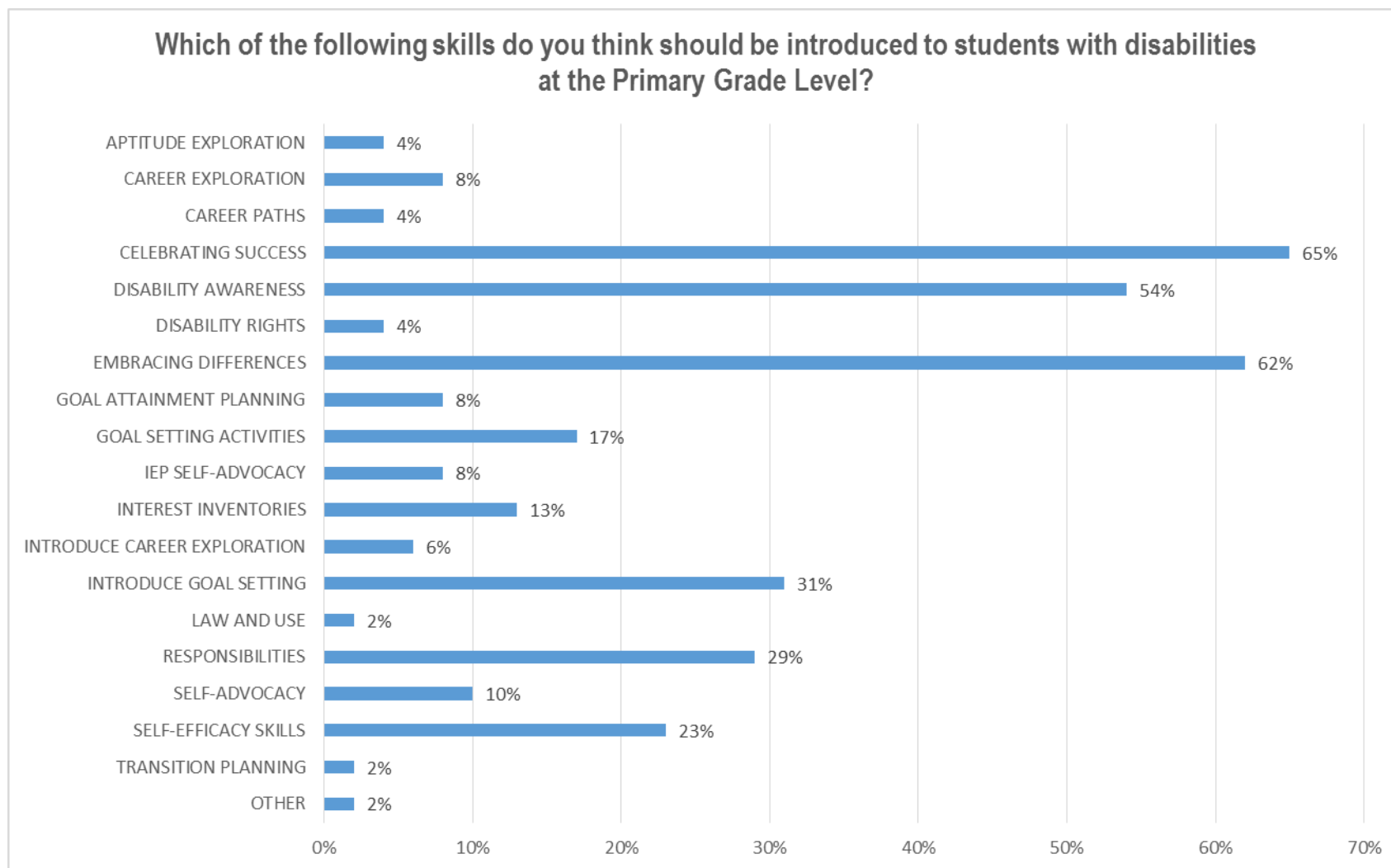
Skip logic was utilized to identify teachers by grade level spans and direct them to a question that disaggregated teachers with less than four years of experience at the targeted grade level span. Veteran teachers were asked what transition skills they felt should be introduced or taught at the grade level spans, with which they self-identified, as having four or more years of

experience. These questions were in the form of checklists. The choices provided were as follows: celebrating success, embracing differences, self-efficacy skills, disability awareness, self-advocacy, introduce goal setting, introduce career exploration, interest inventories, aptitude exploration, career exploration, goal setting activities, IEP self-advocacy, responsibilities, disability rights, transition planning, goal attainment planning, laws and use, and career paths. The opportunity of an open response (other) was also available to survey participants.

There were fifty-two responses from veteran teachers at the Primary grade level. Each of the categories at the Primary level for this question received at least one vote from survey participants. In examining the data, a natural drop off in responses occurred at 54%. Three potential framework categories fell within this span. These categories were: celebrating success (65%), embracing differences (62%), and disability awareness (54%). The write-in response for this grade span was, “teaching academics.” Visual representations of this information can be found below in table 2-6 and figure 2-15.

*Table 2-6 Veteran teacher responses Primary Grade Span*

<b>Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Primary Grade Level?</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
celebrating success	34	65%
embracing differences	32	62%
self-efficacy skills	12	23%
Disability Awareness	28	54%
self-advocacy	5	10%
introduce goal setting	16	31%
introduce career exploration	3	6%
Interest inventories	7	13%
Aptitude exploration	2	4%
Career exploration	4	8%
Goal setting activities	9	17%
IEP self-advocacy	4	8%
Responsibilities	15	29%
Disability rights	2	4%
Transition planning	1	2%
Goal attainment planning	4	8%
Laws and use	1	2%
Career paths	2	4%
Other please list	1	2%



*Figure 2-15 Graph of veteran teacher responses Primary Grade Span*

There were seventy-seven responses to this question from veteran teachers at the Intermediate grade level. Each of the categories in this question received at least one vote from survey participants at the Intermediate level except that of “Law and use”. In examining the data, a natural drop off in responses occurred at 43%. Six categories fell within this range. They included: introducing goal setting (83%), celebrating success (60%), embracing differences (58%), disability awareness (62%), introducing career exploration (56%), and responsibilities (43%).

Two teachers took the time to write in responses in the other category. Their information included:

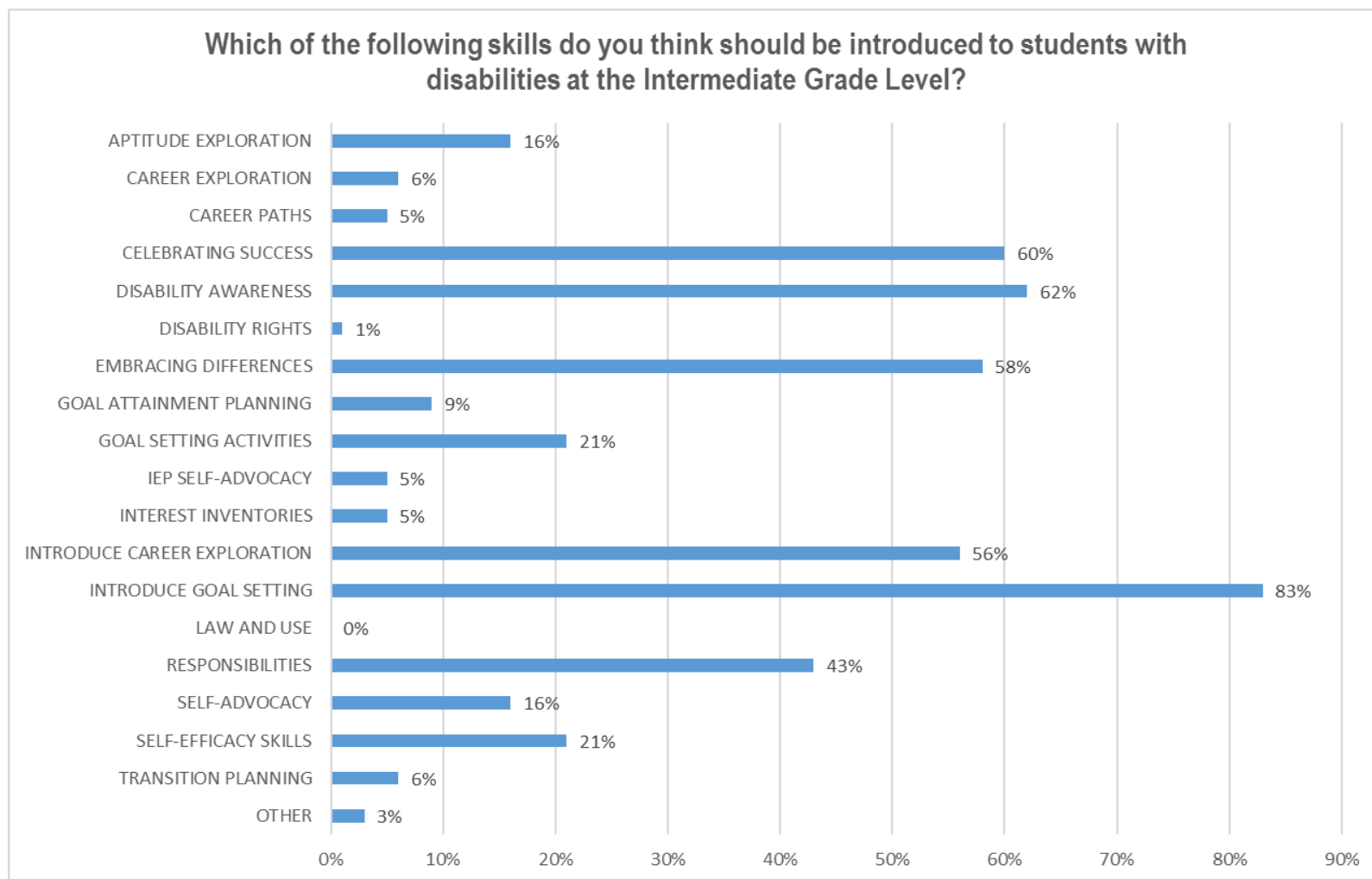
1. “Organizational Skills”
2. “Giving Students Time to get to know students with disabilities and interact with them. Elementary students and middle school students are accepting of those with differences especially when relationships are given a chance to establish and be fostered. Reg. Ed students need the opportunity to learn how best to assist others.”

Visual representations of this information can be found below in table 2-7 and figure 2-16.

*Table 2-7 Veteran teacher responses Intermediate Grade Span*

<b>Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Intermediate Grade Level?</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
celebrating success	46	60%
embracing differences	45	58%
self-efficacy skills	16	21%
Disability Awareness	48	62%
self-advocacy	12	16%
introduce goal setting	64	83%
introduce career exploration	43	56%
Interest inventories	4	5%
Aptitude exploration	12	16%
Career exploration	5	6%
Goal setting activities	16	21%
IEP self-advocacy	4	5%
Responsibilities	33	43%
Disability rights	1	1%
Transition planning	5	6%
Goal attainment planning	7	9%
Laws and use	0	0%
Career paths	4	5%
Other please list	2	3%





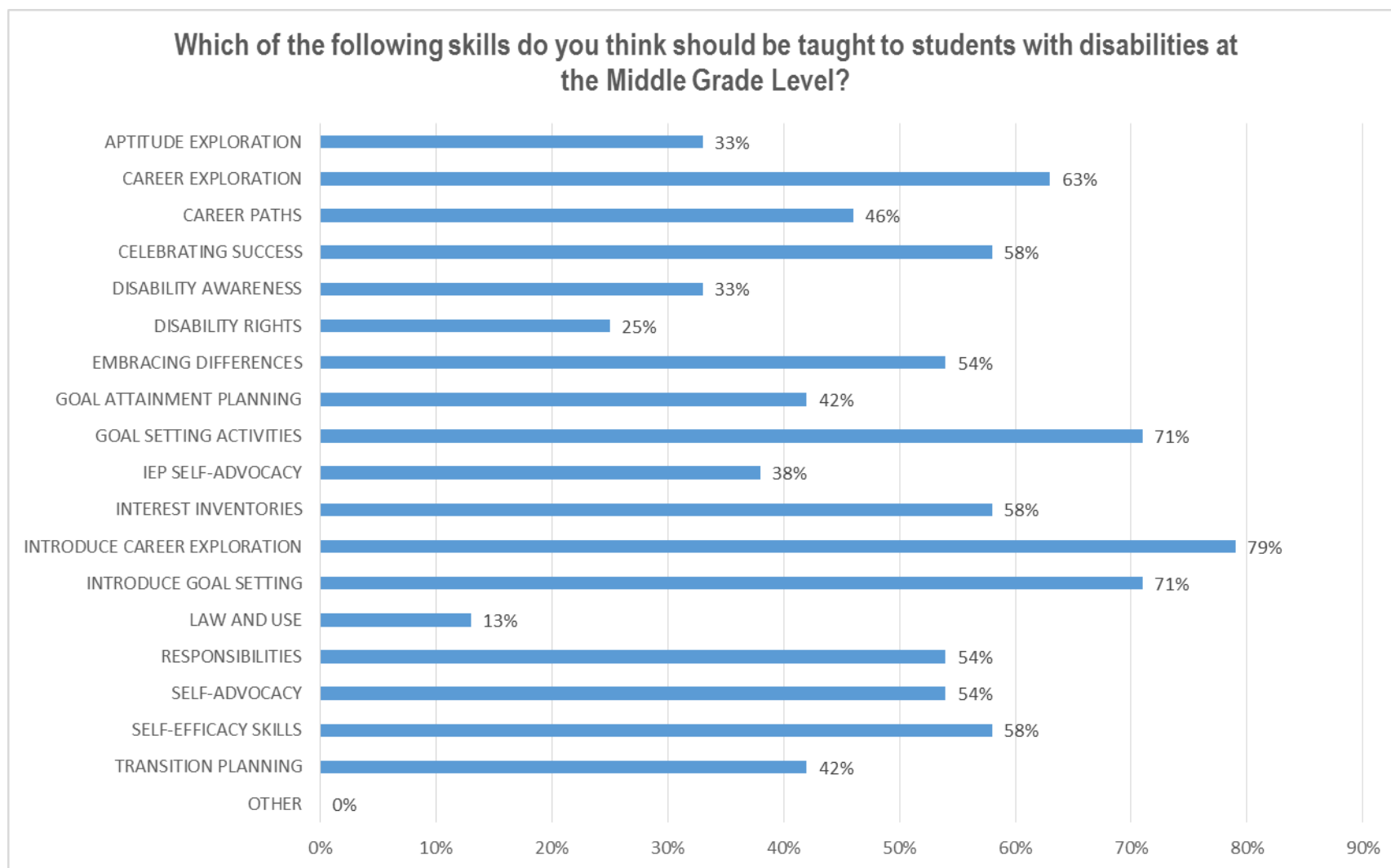
*Figure 2-16 Graph of veteran teacher responses Intermediate Grade Span*

Twenty-four veteran middle school teachers responded to this question. Each of the categories in this question received at least three votes from survey participants at the Middle School level, except the write-in category of other. No teachers, at the Middle School level, wrote in suggestions to this question.

Natural drops in teacher responses were difficult to discern, possibly due to the small sample size. However, there were drops in responses at 54% and at 33%. Ten categories fell within the first range. They included introducing career exploration (79%), introducing goal setting (71%), goal setting activities (71%), career exploration (63%), celebrating success (58%), self-efficacy skills (58%), interest inventories (58%), embracing differences (54%), self-advocacy (54%), and responsibilities (54%). The second range at this grade span included: career paths (46%), transition planning (42%), goal attainment planning (42%), IEP self-advocacy (38%), disability awareness (33%), and aptitude exploration (33%). Visual representations of this information can be found below in table 2-8 and as a graph in figure 2-17.

*Table 2-8 Veteran teacher responses Middle School Grade Span*

<b>Which of the following skills do you think should be taught to students with disabilities at the Middle Grade Level?</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
celebrating success	14	58%
embracing differences	13	54%
self-efficacy skills	14	58%
Disability Awareness	8	33%
self-advocacy	13	54%
introduce goal setting	17	71%
introduce career exploration	19	79%
Interest inventories	14	58%
Aptitude exploration	8	33%
Career exploration	15	63%
Goal setting activities	17	71%
IEP self-advocacy	9	38%
Responsibilities	13	54%
Disability rights	6	25%
Transition planning	10	42%
Goal attainment planning	10	42%
Laws and use	3	13%
Career paths	11	46%
Other please list	0	0%



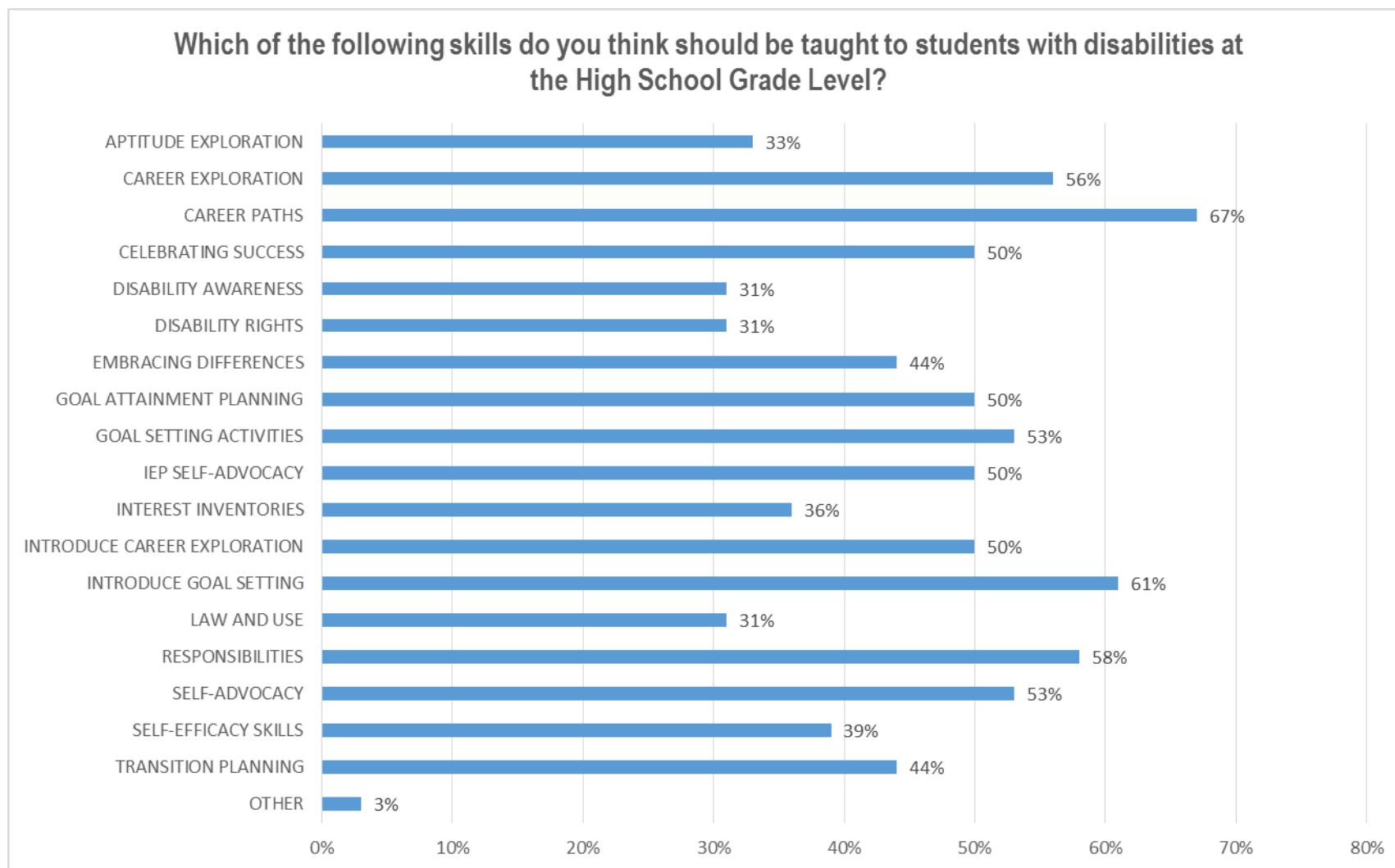
*Figure 2-17 Graph of veteran teacher responses Middle School Grade Span*

At the high school grade span, thirty-six veteran high school teachers responded to this question. Each of the categories in this question, except the write-in category of other, received at least eleven votes from survey participants at the high school level. There was one write-in response for “other” at this grade span. The write-in suggestion was, “encouragement to know THEY can do something and can do it well.”

In examining the data, at the high school grade span, a drop occurred between the four categories at 50% and the two categories at 44%, and then again at 39%. However, as previously stated, each of the categories in this question received at least eleven votes, (31%), from survey participants except the write-in category of other. Visual representations of this information can be found below in table 2-9 and figure 2-18.

*Table 2-9 Veteran teacher responses High School Grade Span*

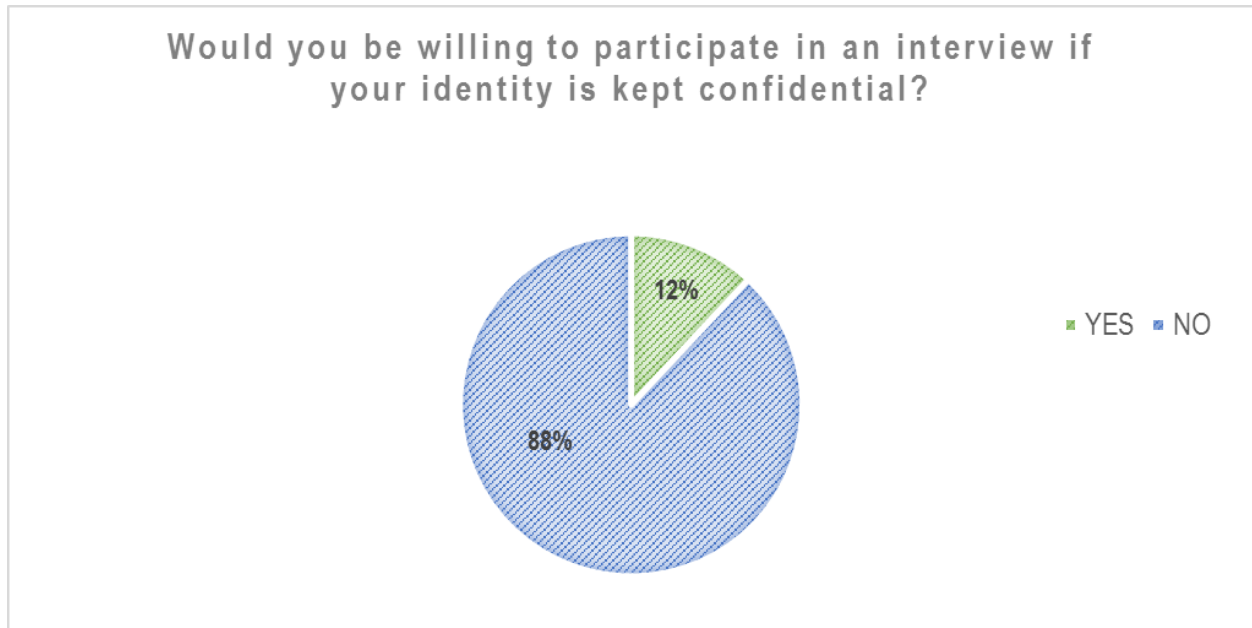
<b>Which of the following skills do you think should be taught to students with disabilities at the High School Grade Level?</b>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
celebrating success	18	50%
embracing differences	16	44%
self-efficacy skills	14	39%
Disability Awareness	11	31%
self-advocacy	19	53%
introduce goal setting	22	61%
introduce career exploration	18	50%
Interest inventories	13	36%
Aptitude exploration	12	33%
Career exploration	20	56%
Goal setting activities	19	53%
IEP self-advocacy	18	50%
Responsibilities	21	58%
Disability rights	11	31%
Transition planning	16	44%
Goal attainment planning	18	50%
Laws and use	11	31%
Career paths	24	67%
Other please list	1	3%



*Figure 2-18 Graph of veteran teacher responses High School Grade Span*

### The Intended Interviews

Before directing survey participants to the screen thanking them for participating in the survey, they were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview if their identity was kept confidential. One hundred ninety teachers responded to this question. Only twenty-two (12%) of the teachers responded to the affirmative, indicating they would agree to be interviewed. One hundred sixty-eight (88%) of the teachers completing the survey declined. Please see figure 2-19 below.



*Figure 2-19 Teachers willing to participate in an interview*

Through the use of skip logic on Qualtrics (Qualtrics, n.d.), the teachers who indicated they were willing to be interviewed were directed to a question that stated, “If you have indicated that you are willing to participate in a confidential interview please provide your contact information in the space below.” Only sixteen of the twenty two teachers who indicated they



were willing to participate in a confidential interview responded to the contact information request. Seven of those sixteen responses did not leave valid contact information. One teacher even stated, in the survey, that she had changed her mind. When the researcher attempted to schedule interviews with the survey participants who provided contact information, the list dwindled to five potential interviews. Three of the five teachers would not commit to a date or a method for an interview.

Due to teachers in the target district seeming disinclination to be interviewed, the researcher sought guidance from colleagues and the Program Coordinator at University of Central Florida. Through collaboration with the Program Coordinator, it was realized that participant apprehension might be due to participant concern regarding confidentiality. The target district is very small. The Program Coordinator recommended the researcher offer to take extra steps to ensure the confidentiality of potential interview participants.

The researcher reconnected with the teachers who had provided contact information and discussed their reservations. Upon direct conversation, some participants did express concern regarding confidentiality. Due to participant concerns of being identified by their comments, the researcher offered to further protect participant confidentiality by not using direct quotes or identifying the schools or grade levels of the participating teachers. Through these efforts, five teachers agreed to be interviewed; however, only two teachers were willing to schedule an appointment for an interview. After reflection and collaboration with colleagues and advisors at the university level, the decision was made to forego the interview process.

### **Summary of Findings from the Pilot Study**

As stated earlier, Two hundred eighty-nine educators participated in the survey to inform the K – 12 Transition implementation Framework, but all participants did not respond to every

question. Sections of the survey were targeted for classroom teachers at specific grade spans for the purpose of informing the body of knowledge prior to the finalization of the proposed framework. This endeavor was facilitated in that 84% of the participants self-identified as instructional staff. These educators were divided between high school (14%), middle school (12%), elementary (67%), and combination (7%).

The data, provided by teacher responses to the survey, reinforced the findings in the literature as well as sections of the preliminary design of the K – 12 Transition Implementation Framework. The literature informed that one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of students with disabilities to be meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The literature also indicated a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level (Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008), with a lack of time to deliver effective transition services being one of the major barriers (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010). Teacher responses to questions regarding time to teach transition skills indicated that a large majority of the respondents (90%) did not perceive they had adequate time to teach transition skills to students with disabilities. This aligns with concerns expressed in the literature and supports the need to improve the process in the target district.

Insight was also gained from teacher responses to the question “What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?” Fifty-two teachers responded to this open response question. The two themes most prevalent from the coded responses of the teachers were, a lack of time (40%), and communication (19%). The majority of the comments about time simply stated

“time” or “lack of time and ...” There were also references to lack of time due to too much testing. Teacher’s comments regarding communication ranged from polite, “Additional communication can be needed at times” to indecorous, “Lousy communication”, and “When transition is not promoted and students/parents receive nothing due to uninformed, uncaring, and/or untrained teachers and support personnel.” These concerns expressed by teachers support one facet of the problem of practice that the absence of an integrated transition plan is adversely affecting the potential transition of students with disabilities served by the district. They also support the need for a K – 12 transition continuum. The literature supports the benefit to students receiving effective, person-centered transition services, (Newman, et.al, 20011; & Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). Additionally, all of the eighteen skill sets addressed in the preliminary framework received a positive response from over 30% of the high school veteran teachers responding to the survey. This indicated the veteran high school teachers felt all the recommended skill sets important to the successful transition of students. One high school teacher took the time to write-in the suggestion of “encouragement to know THEY can do something and can do it well.” This suggestion resonates with the spirit of person centered transition.

At the middle school grade span, 13% of the veteran teachers selected all of the skill sets as needing to be taught to students with disabilities during the middle school grades. Ten of the skill sets fell within the first natural cut at the middle school level indicating them to be more important than previously understood by the researcher. The skill sets within the first natural cut at the middle school level were: career exploration (79%), introducing goal setting (71%), goal setting activities (71%), career exploration (63%), celebrating success (58%), self-efficacy skills

(58%), interest inventories (58%), embracing differences (54%), self-advocacy (54%), and responsibilities (54%).

Seventy-seven veteran teachers responded to the skill sets question at the Intermediate grade level. All of the skill sets except “Laws and use” received at least one vote from survey participants at the Intermediate level. A natural drop off of selection occurred at 43%, and six categories fell within this range. The skill sets in this range included introducing goal setting (83%), celebrating success (60%), embracing differences (58%), disability awareness (62%), introducing career exploration (56%), and responsibilities (43%).

The skill sets question drew fifty-two responses from veteran teachers at the Primary grade level. Each of the categories at the Primary level for this question received at least one vote from the veteran teachers with a natural drop off in responses at 54%. Three skill sets fell within this range. These included: celebrating success (65%), embracing differences (62%), and disability awareness (54%). One teacher took the time to write-in the reminder of, “teaching academics”.

Data gleaned from the pilot study and delineated above will be used to inform the K – 12 Transition Framework. The continued inclusion of all of the skill sets used in the preliminary design at the high school grade span was supported by the data obtained from the skill sets question posed to veteran high school teachers. However, data indicated the need to modify and expand the researcher’s preliminary design of the framework at the middle school, intermediate and primary grade spans of the framework.

## CHAPTER 3: THE DESIGN

### **The Problem of Practice**

Sixty nine percent of students with disabilities in a small north Florida school district failed to complete high school and transition into productive post-secondary experiences. Therefore, the problem of practice this Dissertation in Practice will address is the lack of a consistent transition continuum for students with disabilities to develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

### **The Proposal**

In chapter one, the significance of this problem of practice was explored in detail from various perspectives, including historical, international, and local vantage points. The organizational context was examined and described as being layered with stratum of senior and upper management supervising directors and building principals in a design most closely resembling Mintzberg's Divisionalized Form, (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The factors that impact the transition of students with disabilities in the targeted district were examined through the data and the lens of the literature and shared as lacking in consistency and relevance to students. Additionally, the reader is reminded that the literature informs one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of students with disabilities into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments is meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent,

2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). However, students are traditionally not included in their Individualized Educational Plans until the age of 14, when it is required by law, (*IDEA*, 2004).

It was proposed in chapter one to design a user-friendly K-12 framework to assist and guide teachers in the implementation of transition education and the transition process. The proposed framework would be comprehensive and designed to assist elementary and middle grades teachers in their quest to prepare students with disabilities to participate in the IEP process. It will also help prepare them for participation in secondary transition activities.

### **Collaboration**

In chapter two, the need for the design was reinforced through collaboration with the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district. This collaboration revealed that teachers at the secondary level were expressing concern regarding the majority of students with disabilities arriving to high school with little to no understanding of post-secondary transition. These concerns were reinforced by shortcomings in LEA Indicators for the target district, in that the target district fell short in all five indicators directly related to post-secondary transition. (See figure 2-1 Target District LEA Data compared to state goals for Indicators 1, 13, 14A, 14B, and 14C page 43.).

### **Design Significance**

The K-12 Transition Implementation Framework is unique, in that it will facilitate the preparation of students with disabilities across the K – 12 continuum of grades. Prior to this writing, students with disabilities under the age of 14 have not been consistently included in

plans for their education or their post-secondary transition. Due to federal requirements related to Transition Individualized Education Plans (TIEP) and transition planning, students must be included beginning at age 14 (IDEA, 2004).

### **Resolving the Problem of Practice**

The K – 12 Transition Framework serves to formalize and communicate a written transition plan for the targeted district. By designing the framework to address all grade levels and disseminating it through the K – 12 setting, the framework serves to communicate the district's support for the post-secondary transition process. The framework serves as a guide and identify how efforts at early grade levels create inroads that serve as anchors of prior knowledge. The prior knowledge will become a foundational basis for students as they progress through subsequent grade levels and learning milestones (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). The framework provides a guide to assist teachers and other support personnel in channeling activities with students into a zone where time and efforts can be maximized by targeting activities that are developmentally appropriate, user friendly, and designed with the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

The use of the framework will maximize student success and help them use their prior knowledge base to develop appropriate transition goals in the secondary setting. The positive correlation between student-selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent successful post-secondary activities and environments is well established in the literature (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

## **The Context**

The literature shows correlation between graduation rates and post-secondary transition prospects for this population (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002). If not served effectively, students with disabilities are at risk for dropping out of school and not transitioning into productive adult lives (Newman, Wagner, Huang, Shaver, Knokey, Yu, & Cameto 2011). This translates into a reduction in post-secondary placement options for students with disabilities. Additionally, there is the potential reduction of students with disabilities experiencing success in their post-secondary endeavors (Newman, et. al., 2011). The consequences to individual students include: reduced chances of higher education, reduced employment opportunities, reduced independent living opportunities, lower standards of living, dependence on public assistance, increased chances of law enforcement involvement, and lower self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). Societal issues associated with this complex problem include the cost of public assistance, increased need for law enforcement, the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior, cost of incarceration and reduced income tax revenue due to lower or nonexistent salaries from people who could have become productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

There is a plethora of research delineating the relationship between students with disabilities not completing high school and maladaptive behavior which, can lead to involvement with the criminal justice system (Burke, 2009; Keith, & Mccray, 2002; Kumagami, & Kumagai, 2014; Mallett, 2011; Morris, & Morris, 2006; Neil, 2010; Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirier, 2005; Rucklidge, McLean, & Bateup, 2013; Rutherford, Bullis, Anderson, & Griller-Clark, 2002; Selenius, Hellström, & Belfrage, 2011; Seo, Abbott, & Hawkins, 2008; Whitaker,



2011; & White, & Loeber, 2008). Data from the 2010 census showed only 12.9% of the Inmate Population in the State of Florida tested at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) (Department of Corrections, July 2010A), and the median grade level of achievement by inmates in the state of Florida was upper sixth grade (Department of Corrections, July 2010A).

The literature informs that one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of students with disabilities, into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments, is meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The literature also indicates a lack of effective transition practices at the secondary level (Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008) and further indicates that “teachers are not implementing effective transition planning because of educators’ lack of knowledge, competence, or time to deliver transition services” (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010, p. 103).

The literature suggests that the absence of an integrated transition plan could be adversely affecting students with disabilities served by the target district, in that students frequently reach high school without understanding their disability, themselves, or their abilities. In their report, Newman, et.al, (2011) showed a correlation between students with disabilities dropping out of school and not transitioning into successful post-secondary placements when they had not received effective transition services while at the secondary level. Conversely, in their study, Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) found a high correlation between the completion of student-selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent gainful employment

(Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). Additionally, they provide evidence of the benefits of providing effective, person-centered transition services to students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000).

## **Goals**

The overarching goal of this Dissertation in Practice was to present a framework designed to improve the secondary transition experience for students with disabilities so they develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. This framework will have several ancillary benefits. By improving the secondary transition experience for students with disabilities in the targeted district, the high school graduation rate of students with disabilities in the targeted district should also increase. Increasing the graduation rate and improving the secondary transition experience for students with disabilities will be a symbiotic process for students. The improvement of the transition experience will result in an increase in the students' perceived value of their high school diploma, and earning their high school diploma will give students with disabilities a better chance of securing personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002; Newman, et. al., 2011). The K–12 Transition Framework will facilitate the improvement of transition knowledge for students by integrating activities into all grade levels that move towards improved post-secondary transition outcomes for students in the target district. Concepts integrated into the framework will generate a positive outcome and be generalizable to other school districts in the state of Florida and other states. In so doing, the maximum number of students will be positively affected.

**Subordinate Goals include:**

- ❖ Increased graduation rates of students with disabilities
- ❖ A K – 12 Transition Framework that provides a guide for the inclusion of elementary students in age-appropriate and ability-appropriate transition activities in primary and intermediate grades.
- ❖ Students with disabilities who arrive at high school with a base foundation in transition skills in the form of prior knowledge that will facilitate their meaningful participation in secondary transition activities.

**Key Elements of the Design**

The framework was designed utilizing a prior knowledge scaffolding configuration where the skills learned at the middle grades are built on knowledge concepts developed during primary and intermediate grades, and skills developed at secondary levels are built on skills formed during earlier grade levels. The researcher utilized the input of experienced teachers at various grade and developmental levels to help form the structure and supports of each of the sub-categories of the framework. By utilizing the input of these grade-level experts, the framework is designed be on target to enhance person-centered learning at each grade level from primary grades throughout high school. This was accomplished by scaffolding a learning continuum for students at all grade levels incrementally built on their prior knowledge.

This will result in students arriving at the secondary level with a foundation on which to begin the construction of their own person-centered transition plan.

## **Theories, Concepts and Practices**

The design of this framework draws on the essential principles of several theories of education. The design draws upon the Universal Design for Learning, Enhanced Discovery learning, Constructivism, and the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning.

Universal Design for Learning, frequently referred to as UDL, is a method for designing instruction with built-in flexibility. By building lessons and planning for varying abilities and sensory/motor issues, instruction and activities are designed to engage all students (Cast.org, N.D.). This creates a welcoming climate of learning across cultures, socioeconomics, and ethnicities.

UDL is designed or built on three foundational principles. They are commonly recognized as (1) Flexibility of Representation (2) Flexibility of Expression and (3) Flexibility of Engagement.

The first principle, Provide Multiple Means of Representation, allows for flexibility in the presentation of content and student representation of understanding. The educator or facilitator should plan for variations in the way content may be accessed by students. This can be done by weaving into the presentation of material flexibility that will allow for visual or auditory access of information. (Cast.org, N.D.).

The second principle, Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression, respects the fact that students have different strengths when interacting with the environment and content. This principle encourages incorporating into the structure of the lesson flexible ways for students to respond and interact with instructional materials. This can be done through a range of methods.

Traditional adaptations such as concrete manipulatives, story webs or options available through word processing programs allow some scaffolding. However, modern technology has provided for virtual mathematics manipulatives, speech-to-text narration, and web applications where learners can create their own comic strips to express their thoughts. An example of flexibility of expression is to allow students to design their own cartoon video to express what they know about the subject matter. By giving students these choices, not only are special needs accommodated without stigmatization, but also the content will be more inviting to all students, which encourages deeper participation. This is adapting the ‘how’ of the subject matter (Cast.org, N.D.).

The third principle, Provide Multiple Means of Engagement, seeks to engage students’ attention by providing options for engagement that appeal to various student preferences. Learners process information in various ways and will attend to information and activities they perceive as having value or worth. By offering learners activities that are culturally and socially relevant, teachers will gain their attention. Teachers should also provide a variety of scaffolded choices for students to engage with the content. By doing so, students will be more likely to attend to the targeted academic goals. One strategy to use would be to help students create a project calendar to guide a group project. This is adapting the ‘why’ of the subject matter (Cast.org, N.D.).

When working with students on post-secondary transition activities, it is important to keep the outcomes as person-centered as possible. The theories in Enhanced Discovery Learning lend themselves to keeping the students’ wishes and desires at the center point of planning. The aspect of Enhanced Discovery Learning this framework incorporates is that of guided thinking. By seeking the students’ input and having them share their thought processes (Marzano, 2011),

the teacher can ask targeted questions to help guide the students to options they might not have reached without assistance. This serves to protect learner-generated ideas while still maintaining instructional momentum.

In the theory of Constructivism, Piaget postulated that learners build or “construct” new knowledge through accommodation and assimilation based on the learners’ experiences. This can occur through the process of assimilation, whereby the learner’s existing framework is not modified as a result of the experience, or by accommodation, where the learner’s existing framework is reframed as a result of the external experiences (Burns, 2014; Kessinger, 2011). During the early part of the twentieth century, Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development as part of his work in further developing Piaget’s developmental theories (Schaffer, 2006). The Zone of Proximal Development is the area slightly above a learner’s mastery level where the learner needs some assistance to gain proficiency. It is closely related to the learning process of scaffolding developed by Jerome Bruner and his colleagues when working with the Zone of Proximal Development in their educational research (Schaffer, 2006). Scaffolding is a strategy wherein students are provided with supports during the learning process to help them gain independence in a concept or skill (Schaffer, 2006). Supports are gradually removed as students become proficient and independent in the task.

One of the three main assumptions of Mayer’s Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning is that learning is a process. This process includes filtering, selecting, and organizing information, which learners integrate into their own schema based upon their own prior knowledge. Information is processed through auditory and/or visual channels. However, deeper learning will occur when meaningful images are paired with relevant text (Burns, 2014; Kessinger, 2011).

Cogitating on the information learned through researching the above theories of education served to facilitate the evolution and formalization of the preliminary designs of the K – 12 Transition Framework. Dating back to Piaget’s postulations that learners use accommodation and assimilation to construct new knowledge, building on prior knowledge has been woven through theories of education. (Burns, 2014; Kessinger, 2011; Marzano, 2011; & Schaffer, 2006). This construct is significant and forms the foundational construct for transition preparation to begin in the early grades. Building on this construct, the introduction of transition skills in early grades will serve to maximize the post-secondary transition process for every student with special needs. By seeking out user-friendly resources that incorporate the principles of UDL, the learning potential of all students is maximized (Burns, 2014; Kessinger, 2011).

### **Need for the Design**

The need for the design was initially determined by collaboration with colleagues and the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district. Teachers at the secondary level in the district were expressing concern to the director regarding students with disabilities arriving to high school without the skills needed for post-secondary transition activities. A significant gap between the graduation rates of students with disabilities and general education students was noted, as well as the district not meeting state and federal targets for post-secondary transition indicators (FLDOE, 2015).

As outlined in chapter two, the target district fell significantly below state goals set for indicators 1, 13 and 14 in the Local Education Authority (LEA) Profile section of the Florida’s State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (FLDOE, 2015). Indicators 1, 13 and 14 are the items in the report that relate directly to post-secondary transition for students with disabilities (FLDOE, 2015). The symbiotic effect of secondary transition activities on student

retention/graduation and the benefit of earning a diploma on post-secondary opportunities are supported by the literature (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002; & Newman, et. al., 2011). The data, from the LEA section for the targeted district of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, supports the relationship purported in the literature.

Indicator 1 evaluates the targeted district's graduation rate. Indicator 13 evaluates the targeted district's Transition IEP compliance rate; and Indicator 14 evaluates Post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Indicator 1 set the goal for 54.3% of students to graduate with a standard diploma in the 2012-2013 school year. With only 42.00% of students graduating with a standard diploma, the target district did not meet this goal. The goal for indicator 13 was to have 100% of the IEPs for students with disabilities, aged 16 and above, to include annually-updated, measurable, appropriate postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments and related to the student's transition service needs. The target district, with 0.00% compliance, did not meet this goal. Indicator 14 contained three separate goals. The first was for 29% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. Data for the target district were 18.75% of students with disabilities documented as enrolled in higher education; the target district did not meet this goal. The second goal for indicator 14 was for 42% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be found either competitively employed or enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 37.50% of students with disabilities documented in either of these categories, did not meet this goal. The third goal for indicator 14 was for 54% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012 - 2013 school year to be documented as enrolled in higher education, enrolled in some form of postsecondary training program, competitively employed, or engaged in some other type



of employment within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 52.50% of students with disabilities documented in any of these categories, did not meet this goal. *Figure 2-1 Target District LEA Data compared to state goals for Indicators 1, 13, 14A, 14B, and 14C* on page 41 in Chapter Two provides a visual for the above listed data.

### **Methods for Determining how Goals will be Met**

As stated earlier, the overarching goal of this Dissertation in Practice is to improve the secondary transition experience for students with disabilities so they develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. The transition of students with disabilities into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments is directly correlated with appropriate transition assessments, transition planning and appropriate goals at the secondary level (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). As outlined previously in this chapter, the Florida's State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report contains district-specific, data-driven information in the form of annual LEA Profiles. The reporting of this data is federally mandated through the authority of the reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (FLDOE, 2015). The LEA profile includes specific data on post-secondary transition indicators related to this Dissertation in Practice. The specific indicators that will provide long-term evaluative data as to the effectiveness of this framework are indicators 1, 13, and 14.

The transition indicators delineated previously and reported annually in the LEA Profile section of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, provide the quintessential method for determining the long-term effectiveness of this framework. As stated earlier, the

intent of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report and the county specific data provided by the LEA Profile section is to provide for district use in planning for systemic improvement in exceptional education programs (FLDOE, 2015). As explained earlier, the data provided measures the percentage of students with disabilities as they relate to post-secondary transition indicators. Indicators 1, 13, and 14 provide data as to percentages of students who graduated with a standard diploma, had appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based on proven post-secondary transition research, the percentage of students who were documented to be either enrolled in higher education, enrolled postsecondary education or training program, or were competitively employed within one year exiting high school. Additionally, these data are reported annually as publicly accessible documents.

If the implementation of the K-12 Transition Implementation Framework is making a significant positive impact on transition services for students with disabilities within the target district, the results will be discernible. There will be improvement in the percentage of students who transition into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments and that improvement will be reflected in the aforementioned data of Indicators 1, 13, and 14. The project will be deemed successful if within five years of the effectuation of the K – 12 Transition Framework, the district percentages meet or exceed state goals under all three of indicators outlined above.

Another expectation of the K–12 Transition Framework is an initiation of age-appropriate and ability-appropriate transition activities in primary and intermediate grades for students with disabilities.

This goal will be evaluated in the targeted district by follow-up surveys done annually for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the framework, the appropriateness of the sub-categories, and the addition, modification or deletion of teacher recommended resources.

The final goal needing evaluation was the expectation of students with disabilities arriving to the high school grades with a base foundation in transition skills. The base foundation in transition skills should include prior knowledge that will facilitate their meaningful participation in secondary transition activities. This goal will be evaluated in the targeted district by follow-up surveys done once every three years for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the framework, the appropriateness of the sub-categories, and the addition, modification or deletion of teacher-recommended resources. The reason for the difference in timing for surveying secondary teachers is to allow a sufficient amount of time for the effects of changes and growth made in lower grade levels to reach the secondary level.

### **The Pilot Study**

In order to determine specific teacher concerns regarding implementing transition practices in the Target District, and to inform the K – 12 Transition Framework, the researcher sought a vetted survey that specifically included elementary grade teachers. After an exhaustive search, which included the assistance and guidance of a research librarian, nothing could be found relating post-secondary transition of students with disabilities to a continuum beginning in elementary school grades. Subsequently, permission was sought and obtained to use and modify the survey disseminated in association with *Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida*, authored by Joyce H. Lubbers Florida Department of Education, Jeanne B.

Repetto, *University of Florida, Gainesville*, and Susan P. McGorray *University of Florida, Gainesville* (Lubbers, Repetto, & McGorray, 2008).

The first modification of the survey for this research can be found as Exhibit D to the IRB submission. It contained one informed consent, three general information and experience questions, and twelve questions to inform the K-12 Transition Implementation Framework, three at each of the four grade spans. There were thirteen teacher perception questions included to compare the perception of teachers in the target district with the findings of Wandry, Webb, Williams, Bassett, Asselin, & Hutchinson, 2008, and Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010 regarding effective transition practices at the secondary level. Additionally, several questions were included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district.

After receiving IRB approval for the research, the modified survey was put on Qualtrics for a trial run. The survey was tested by three administrators and five colleagues with knowledge about post-secondary transition and the target district. Input from these critical friends revealed some typographical errors and several of the questions to be repetitive in nature, and the survey was edited. The final survey contained twenty-five questions in addition to the informed consent.

### **Informing the Framework**

Teacher responses to the survey paralleled the findings in the literature and reinforced some elements of the preliminary design of the K – 12 Transition Framework. The literature informs that one of the strongest factors affecting the successful transition of students with disabilities to be meaningful transition planning and meaningful transition goals at the secondary level (Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009;

Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The literature also indicates one of the significant barriers to teachers implementing effective transition planning at the secondary level to be a lack of time to deliver transition services (Izzo, Yurick, Nagaraja, & Novak, 2010).

### **Data Supporting the Need for the Framework**

The need for a K – 12 Transition Framework was supported by data provided through teacher responses to the question “What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?” Fifty-two teachers responded to this open response question. The two themes most prevalent from the coded responses of the veteran teachers were, a lack of time (40%), and communication (19%). Some of the responses made by veteran teachers under the theme of lack of time included:

- ❖ “Time/Trained People”
- ❖ “Not enough time/support.”
- ❖ “Time and lack of awareness of resources”

Veteran teacher responses under the theme of communication were fewer in quantity, but more intense with verbiage. Some responses made by veteran teachers under the theme of communication included:

- ❖ “My lack of knowledge of what happens after the students leave my school; I don't know enough about what happens next.”
- ❖ “lack of information being given out; not informing all teachers of programs for various students; agencies not having time to be involved; parents who don't care.”
- ❖ “Lousy communication”
- ❖ “Many parents and students do not know all the services and options that are available to them.”

- ❖ “The main barrier is communication. The parents, school and student need to have regular progress evaluations.”
- ❖ “When transition is not promoted and students/parents receive nothing due to uninformed, uncaring, and/or untrained teachers and support personnel.”

Data produced by veteran teacher responses to this question support the postulation that one facet of the problem of practice, the absence of an integrated transition plan, is adversely affecting the potential transition of students with disabilities served by the target district. The literature supports the benefit to students receiving effective, person-centered transition services (Newman, et.al, 20011; & Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000), and the data from the pilot support the need for a K – 12 transition continuum. Students will participate in deeper, more meaningful person-centered transition activities at the secondary level when prior knowledge is generated at early grade levels (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). This foundation of knowledge will become a constructional base for students as they progress through subsequent grade levels and learning milestones (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009) up to and including the secondary grades. This will result in deeper, more meaningful person-centered transition activities for students at the secondary level.

The foundational base of prior learning will be strengthened and teacher efforts/time maximized by the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (National Center on UDL, N.D.) UDL is designed around three foundational principles. They are commonly recognized as (1) Flexibility of Representation (2) Flexibility of Expression and (3) Flexibility of Engagement. (National Center on UDL, N.D.).

The potential benefit of a K – 12 Transition Framework is reinforced by the data provided through teacher answers to many of the questions in the pilot study. One of the questions included at the request of the Director of Exceptional Student Services was, “What would help you implement teaching transition skills?” Forty-seven percent of the teachers responding to this question made some reference to not having enough time to properly address transition skills, and thirty percent of the teachers expressed the need for training. One response to this question was, “More time; additional training that includes models that work and key elements needed to teach transition skills.” Another teacher’s response regarding time was, “Relaxed curriculum requirements (directly related to testing), which would provide time for these important life activities.” Teacher responses around the theme of training included, “Knowing what the transition skills are.” The K – 12 Transition Framework will help maximize teacher time by providing a guide for secondary teachers. Additionally, the framework will guide and facilitate efforts to include students at younger grade levels in the transition process. This will introduce them to and include them in their own transition continuum. By expanding transition efforts to include elementary students with disabilities, these students will have an opportunity to design a stronger and deeper foundation on which to construct their transition goals and plans.

The K – 12 Transition Framework will guide the construction of a foundational base at the elementary grade level for future connection when the student reaches the secondary level. Students connecting to their prior knowledge about a subject is a widely accepted strategy for enhancing the learning experience of students (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). Introducing students with disabilities to post-secondary transition concepts while they are still in the elementary grades will allow them to build their knowledge structure regarding their future.

This will enhance potential knowledge growth at the secondary level due to students with disabilities having prior knowledge about opportunities, education and careers. A strong foundation will support transition goal setting and planning. This strong foundation will facilitate students with disabilities becoming part of the solution path that leads to their own meaningful, person-centered planning. This will translate into the successful transition of students with disabilities into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Wagner et al., 2003; Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010; Test, Mustian, Mazzotti, & White, 2009; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

### **The Framework**

The final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework was informed by the pilot survey. Sections of the survey were targeted for veteran classroom teachers at specific grade spans to inform the body of knowledge prior to the finalization of the domains in the K – 12 Transition Framework. For the purpose of this research, a veteran classroom teacher was defined as a teacher having four or more years of classroom experience at a given grade span. The veteran teacher's answers to specific skill set questions provided the data to inform the domains in the final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework. Eighty four percent of the participants in the pilot survey self-identified as instructional staff, of which, (14%) identified with high school, (12%) with middle school, (67%) with elementary, and (7%) as a combination. Data gleaned from the pilot study was used to inform the K – 12 Transition Framework. The data obtained from the skill sets questions of the pilot survey was used to remodel the preliminary design of the K – 12 Transition Framework. Additionally, the grade span levels were categorized into four domains. Backward planning was used to explain each of the domains in the final design of the K – 12 Transition Framework.



## **Domain 4, High School**

On the K – 12 Transition Framework Domain 4 includes the entire high school grade span from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This domain is separated into two levels. The senior year is set apart from grades nine through eleven. The reason for this separation is the goal of having students use their senior year to practice the skills they will need in the post-secondary setting while still under the umbrella of the Individualized Education Plan IEP.

### ***Data for Domain 4 High School***

Data derived through the responses of veteran high school teachers supported the inclusion of all of the skill sets recommended in the preliminary design for the high school grade span, Domain 4. The data further recommended all eighteen skill sets be taught and/or reinforced at the high school level. All of the eighteen skill sets addressed in the preliminary framework received a positive vote from over 30% of the veteran high school teachers responding to this survey question. This indicated the veteran high school teachers felt all the recommended skill sets important to students with disabilities at the secondary level and their successful transition. This data informed the finalization of Domain 4 of the K – 12 Transition Framework.

### ***Skill Sets for Domain 4***

The skill sets included in Domain 4 are: aptitude exploration, career exploration, career paths, celebrating success disability awareness, disability rights, embracing differences, goal attainment planning, goal setting activities, IEP self-advocacy, interest inventories, introduce career exploration, introduce goal setting, laws/use, responsibilities, self-advocacy, self-efficacy skills, and transition planning. A visual of the details of Domain 4 can be found in figure 3-1 below.



Figure 3-1 Domain 4 High School Grade Span

### **Domain 3, Middle School Grades**

On the K – 12 Transition Framework, Domain 3 included grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Data derived through the responses of veteran middle school teachers supported the inclusion of five of the six skill sets recommended in the preliminary design for the middle school grade span, Domain 3. The skill sets supported by the data for retention include: self-advocacy, goal setting activities, career exploration, interest inventories, and self-efficacy skills. The data further recommends the following skill sets be added to Domain 3: introducing goal setting, celebrating success, embracing differences, and responsibilities.

#### ***Data for Domain 3***

At the middle school grade span, Domain 3, 13% of the veteran teachers selected all of the skill sets as needing to be taught to students with disabilities during the middle school grades. Ten of the skill sets fell within the first natural cut at the middle school level indicating them to be more important to teachers with experience teaching at the middle school level. The skill sets within the first natural cut at the middle school level were: career exploration (63%), introducing goal setting (71%), goal setting activities (71%), career exploration (79%), celebrating success (58%), self-efficacy skills (58%), interest inventories (58%), embracing differences (54%), self-advocacy (54%), and responsibilities (54%). The skill sets, in the second range for Domain 3 were: career paths (46%), transition planning (42%), goal attainment planning (42%), IEP self-advocacy (38%), disability awareness (33%), and aptitude exploration (33%). This data informed the finalization of Domain 3 of the K – 12 Transition Framework.

### ***Skill Sets for Domain 3***

The skill sets included at Domain 3 in the final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework are: career exploration, introducing goal setting, goal setting activities, career exploration, celebrating success, self-efficacy skills, interest inventories, embracing differences, self-advocacy, and responsibilities. A visual representation of the details of Domain 3 can be found in figure 3-2 below.



*Figure 3-2 Domain 3 Middle School Grade Span*

## **Domain 2, Intermediate Grades**

On the K – 12 Transition Framework, Domain 2 included 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The preliminary design included four skill sets at this level: introducing career exploration, introducing goal setting, disability awareness, and self-efficacy skills. Data derived through the responses of veteran teachers for the intermediate grades support the continued inclusion of three of the four six skill sets recommended in the preliminary design for the Intermediate Grades, Domain 2. The skill sets supported by the data for retention included: introducing goal setting, disability awareness, and introducing career exploration. The data further recommended the following skill sets be added to Domain 2: celebrating success, embracing differences, and responsibilities.

### ***Data for Domain 2***

Seventy-seven veteran teachers responded to the skill set question at the intermediate grade span, Domain 2. Each of the categories in this question received at least one vote from survey participants at the Intermediate level, except that of “Law and use.” In examining the data, a natural drop off in responses occurred at 43%. Six categories fell within this range. They included: introducing goal setting (83%), celebrating success (60%), embracing differences (58%), disability awareness (62%), introducing career exploration (56%), and responsibilities (43%).

Two teachers took the time to write in responses in the other category. Their information included:

1. “Organizational Skills”
2. “Giving Students Time to get to know students with disabilities and interact with them.

Elementary students and middle school students are accepting of those with differences

especially when relationships are given a chance to establish and be fostered. Reg. Ed students need the opportunity to learn how best to assist others.”

### ***Skill Sets for Domain 2***

Six skill sets were included at Domain 2 in the final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework. They were: introducing goal setting, celebrating success, embracing differences, disability awareness, introducing career exploration, and responsibilities. A visual representation of the details of Domain 2 can be found in figure 3-3 below.



*Figure 3-3 Domain 2 Intermediate Grades*



## **Domain 1, Primary Grades**

On the K – 12 Transition Framework, grades kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> were included in Domain 1. Data derived through the responses of veteran primary school teachers supported the inclusion of both of the skill sets recommended in the preliminary design for the primary grade span, Domain 1. The skill sets supported by the data for retention include: celebrating success, embracing differences. The data further recommended the following skill sets be added to Domain 1: introduce goal setting and responsibilities.

### ***Data for Domain 1***

Fifty-two veteran teachers responded to the skill set question on the pilot study at the primary grade level. Data derived through the responses of the participants at the primary grade level was used to modify Domain 1 of the K – 12 Transition Framework. Each of the categories at the primary grade level for this question received at least one vote from survey participants. In examining the data, natural drops in responses occurred at 54% and 29%. Three skill sets fell within the first span and two fell within the second span. These categories were: celebrating success (65%), embracing differences (62%), and disability awareness (54%), goal setting (31%), and responsibilities (29%). The write-in response for this grade span was, “teaching academics.”

### ***Skill Sets for Domain 1***

The skill sets included at Domain 1 in the final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework were: celebrating success, embracing differences, disability awareness, and introduce goal setting. A visual representation of the details of Domain 1 can be found in figure 3-4 below.



*Figure 3-4 Domain 1 Primary Grades*

## **The Final Design**

The concept of beginning with the end in mind, a backward planning process, was used to refine the final design of the K – 12 Transition Framework. By design the final version of the K – 12 Transition Framework addresses all grade levels from kindergarten through the senior year. The summate of the framework, part of Domain 4, shows students with disabilities exiting their senior year of high school being college, career, and/or community ready. One of the teachers at the primary grade level took the time to write in an answer to the skill set question. The write in was, “teaching academics.” The researcher felt the continued teaching of academics to be understood. However, this teacher’s input initiated a thought process that led to the incorporation of academics in the design.

### **Domain 4**

Domain 4 includes the high school grade span from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. There is a separation between the grade levels nine through eleven and the senior year. The reason for the divide is to have students use their senior year to practice the skills they will need in the post-secondary setting while still under the protection of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The skill sets included in Domain 4 are: aptitude exploration, career exploration, career paths, celebrating success, disability awareness, disability rights, embracing differences, goal attainment planning, goal setting activities, IEP self-advocacy, interest inventories, introduce career exploration, introduce goal setting, laws/use, responsibilities, self-advocacy, self-efficacy skills, and transition planning.

### **Domain 3**

Domain 3 includes grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades, the middle school years. The skill sets included in Domain 3 are: career exploration, introducing goal setting, goal setting activities, celebrating success, self-efficacy skills, interest inventories, embracing differences, self-advocacy, and responsibilities.

### **Domain 2**

Domain 2 covers the intermediate grades of 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The skill sets included in Domain 2 includes: introducing goal setting, celebrating success, embracing differences, disability awareness, introducing career exploration, and responsibilities.

### **Domain 1**

Domain 1 includes the primary grade span, grades kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. The skill sets included in Domain 1 are: celebrating success, embracing differences, disability awareness, and introduce goal setting.

A visual representation of the K – 12 Transition Framework is depicted in figure 3-5 below.

# K – 12 TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

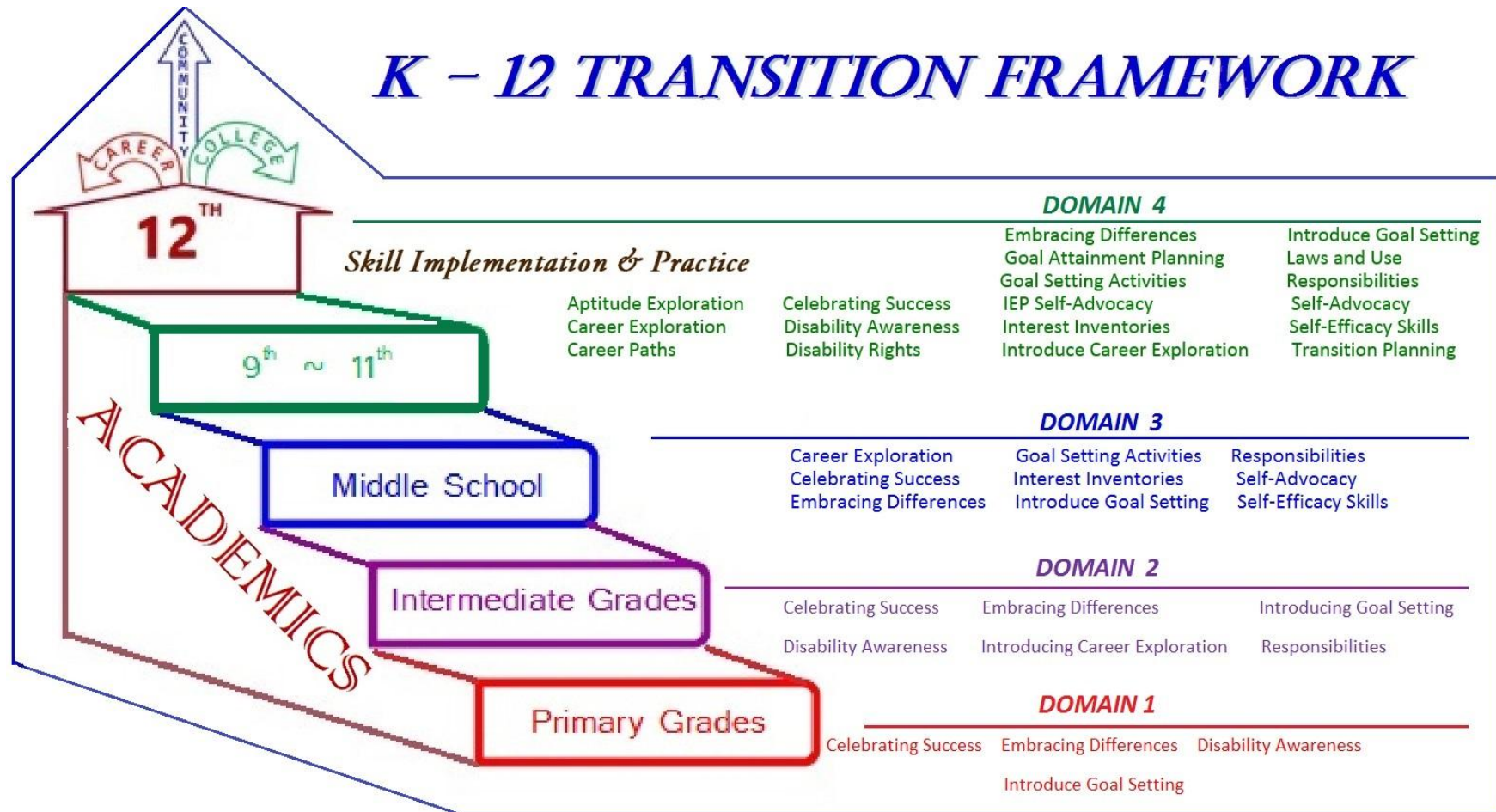


Figure 3-5 The K – 12 Transition Framework Designed by Jenee' DeLaney 2016

## **CHAPTER 4: K-12 TRANSITION FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS**

### **The Problem of Practice**

Sixty-nine percent of students with disabilities in a small north Florida school district failed to complete high school and transition into productive post-secondary experiences. Therefore, the problem of practice this Dissertation in Practice will address is the lack of a consistent transition continuum for students with disabilities to develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye, *Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart*, 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

### **Summary of the K -12 Transition Framework**

The domains in the K – 12 Transition Framework address all grade levels from kindergarten through the senior year. The apex of the framework shows students with disabilities exiting their senior year of high school being college, career, and/or community ready. Competence in or pathways to competence are needed in some specific key areas in order for students with disabilities to transition into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. Specific skill sets needed will vary according to the individualized abilities, needs, and circumstances of each student; however, competencies in, or pathways to competence in the skill sets, are needed for all students with disabilities prior to them entering their postsecondary life.

Through this project, the researcher has shown how transition efforts at early grades creates a foundational basis of prior knowledge that enhances the future learning experience of students (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). The benefits of using the three

principles incorporated in the method of Universal Design for Learning, (1. Flexibility of Representation 2. Flexibility of Expression and 3. Flexibility of Engagement), (National Center on UDL, N.D.) to build flexibility into activities when creating these experiences has also been shown. The combination of these concepts in a culturally and socially relevant manner will serve to provide students with disabilities the skills needed to be college, career, and/or community ready while maximizing the time and efforts of teachers and other support personnel.

The formal dissemination of the K – 12 Transition Framework will serve to communicate the target district's support for the post-secondary transition process. However, it is the researcher's hope that the positive outcomes created by the K – 12 Transition Framework will be generalizable to other school districts in the state of Florida and other states. In so doing, the maximum number of students will be positively affected.

### **Expected Results**

The intended goal of the K – 12 Transition Framework is to improve the transition experience for students with disabilities so they develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. The K–12 Transition Framework will facilitate integration of transition activities into all grade levels. This will result in the improvement of each student's transition knowledge base prior to his or her arrival at the secondary setting. This will improve student's transition experience in the target district. By improving the transition experience for students with disabilities in the targeted district, the high school graduation rate of students with disabilities will also increase.

Currently, the target district is not meeting LEA Profile state goal expectations in any of the four indicators for post-secondary transition. LEA Profiles are the sections of the State

Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report that contain information that compares districts to the state required levels across 16 indicators of the State Systemic Improvement Plan.

Indicator 1 evaluates the targeted district's graduation rate. Indicator 13 evaluates the targeted district's Transition IEP compliance rate; and Indicator 14 evaluates Post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. Indicator 1 set the goal for 54.3% of students to graduate with a standard diploma in the 2012-2013 school year. With only 42.00% of students graduating with a standard diploma, the target district did not meet this goal. The goal for indicator 13 was to have 100% of the IEPs for students with disabilities, aged 16 and above, to include annually-updated, measurable, appropriate postsecondary goals based on age-appropriate transition assessments, and related to the student's transition service needs. The target district, with 0.00% compliance, did not meet this goal. Indicator 14 contained three separate goals. The first was for 29% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. Data for the target district were 18.75% of students with disabilities documented as enrolled in higher education; the target district did not meet this goal. The second goal for indicator 14 was for 42% of students with disabilities exiting school in the 2012-2013 school year to be found either competitively employed or enrolled in higher education within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 37.50% of students with disabilities documented in either of these categories, did not meet this goal. The third goal for indicator 14 was for 54% of students with disabilities, exiting school in the 2012 - 2013 school year to be documented as enrolled in higher education, enrolled in some form of postsecondary training program, competitively employed, or engaged in some other type of employment within one year of exiting high school. The target district, with only 52.50% of students with disabilities documented in any of these categories, did not meet this goal.



Successful implementation of the K – 12 Transition Framework will result in goals being met or exceeded in all four of the indicators related to post-secondary transition. Figure 2-1 on page 41 provides a visual comparing the target district data to the LEA goals for the indicators related to this research, and the full LEA document can be found beginning on page 197 as Appendix C.

This symbiotic process created by the integration of transition activities into all grade levels will produce valuable results for students. The improvement of the transition experience will result in an increase in the students' perceived value of their high school diplomas, and earning their high school diplomas will give students with disabilities a better chance of securing personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002; Newman, et. al., 2011).

### **Target Audience**

The initial target audience for the K – 12 Transition Framework is administration in the target district. The framework will be presented to ESE Administration for approval and dissemination within the target district. Once approved, the intent is to include the framework on the ESE website as an interactive expert-moderated wiki (Barsky, E. & Giustini, D., 2007). Teachers would be able to submit and access resources and/or lesson plans for skill sets through the internet.

This will be of great benefit to teachers planning transition activities; however, the benefit to students with disabilities is the primary goal. Positive outcomes will be created for students in the target district by integrating transition activities into all grade levels. This will result in students with disabilities developing appropriate skills to transition through school into

personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. These results will be generalizable to other school districts in the state of Florida and other states, positively affecting a significant number of students with disabilities.

Additionally, potential benefits to students include increased employment opportunities, increased independent living opportunities, increased chances of higher education, the potential of a higher standard of living, reduced chances of law enforcement involvement, and higher self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). Potential benefits to society include a reduction in the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior such as an decreased need for law enforcement and the cost of incarceration and increased income tax revenue due to higher salaries from people who became productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008),

### **Anticipated Changes**

The Anticipated Change in the target district, catalyzed by the design of the K – 12 Transition Framework, is to improve variables related to the transition of students with disabilities (SWD) from the K-12 school environment to adult life. This will be facilitated by recommending the implementation of the K - 12 Transition Framework to the Director of Exceptional Student Education. The most significant change for the organization will be the integration of transition activities into all grade levels, specifically the elementary grade levels. As the students impacted by this change in elementary school begin to matriculate to the secondary level, growth will be evident in their knowledge base related to transition. Transition activities for students at the elementary level will provide students with a prior knowledge base related to the skill sets and competencies needed for a personally successful, post-secondary

transition process at the secondary level. Specific skill sets needed will vary according to the individualized abilities, needs, and circumstances of each student; however, competencies in, or pathways to competence in the skill sets, are needed for all students with disabilities prior to them entering their postsecondary life.

### **Indicators of Achieved Goals**

The Florida's State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report contains district-specific, data-driven information in the form of annual LEA Profiles. The LEA profile includes specific data on post-secondary transition indicators related to this Dissertation in Practice. The specific indicators that will provide long-term evaluative data as to the effectiveness of this framework are indicators 1, 13, and 14.

The transition indicators delineated previously and reported annually in the LEA Profile section of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report, provide the quintessential method for evaluating the effectiveness of the K – 12 Transition Framework. As explained earlier, the LEA Profile section of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report provides data of the percentage of students with disabilities as they relate to post-secondary transition indicators. Additionally, these data are reported annually as publicly accessible documents.

Improvement in the percentage of students who transition into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments will be reflected in the aforementioned data of Indicators 1, 13, and 14. The project will be deemed successful if within five years of the effectuation of the K – 12 Transition Framework, the district percentages meet or exceed state goals under all three of indicators outlined above.

The initiation of age-appropriate and ability-appropriate transition activities in primary and intermediate grades for students with disabilities will be evaluated in the targeted district by follow-up surveys. After implementation, surveys will be done annually for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the framework, the appropriateness of the sub-categories, and the addition, modification or deletion of teacher recommended resources.

The final goal needing to be evaluated will be the expectation of students with disabilities arriving to the high school grades with a prior knowledge base in transition skills. The base foundation in transition skills should include prior knowledge that will facilitate their meaningful participation in secondary transition activities. After implementation, this goal will be evaluated in the targeted district by follow-up surveys done once every three years for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the framework, the appropriateness of the sub-categories, and the addition, modification or deletion of teacher-recommended resources. The reason for the difference in timing for surveying secondary teachers is to allow a sufficient amount of time for the effects of changes and growth made in lower grade levels to reach the secondary level.

### **Anticipated Impact**

This framework will impact students, teachers and society. The K – 12 Transition Framework will be beneficial to teachers as they work to prepare their students for the next step in the journey. Post-secondary Transition is a process, a trip as it were. A journey is more efficient with a map, guide and/or a plan is provided. This framework acts as a guide for this purpose. Once fully implemented, teachers in the target district will be able to use the framework to guide the planning of transition activities. It will help communicate to which skills students have already been exposed, what they need to be working on in current efforts, and what

the teacher is preparing them for at the next level. Transition activities will be integrated into all grade levels.

By integrating transition activities into all grade levels, in the target district students with disabilities will develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments. These results will be generalizable to other school districts in the state of Florida and other states positively affecting a significant number of students with disabilities.

The anticipated impact for students with disabilities includes increased employment opportunities, increased independent living opportunities, increased chances of higher education, the potential of a higher standard of living, reduced chances of law enforcement involvement, and higher self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The anticipated impact for society includes a reduction in the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior such as decreased need for law enforcement and the cost of incarceration and increased income tax revenue due to higher salaries from people who became productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008).

## **CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND PROGRAM IMPACT**

### **Implications of This Framework**

The K – 12 Transition Framework has the potential to make a significant impact to the education and post-secondary environments of students with disabilities. The benefit of prior knowledge when making connections to new material (Campbell and Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009) is integral to the design of this framework.

When concepts are introduced to students during domain 1, it may be the first time they have been exposed to the concept. Goal setting, for example, might be infused into other activities. The predominant lesson might not be about “Goal Setting,” but specific effort is made to define “Goal Setting” in relation to activities in the main lesson. This encounter with “Goal Setting” reoccurs throughout student’s incumbency in the Primary grades of Domain 1.

As a student progresses to and through Domain 2, the definition of “Goal Setting” is revisited with the expectation of the student’s understanding of the concept to be maturing. The concept might be modeled for students through a variety of academic tasks, and the job of defining “Goal Setting” would matriculate from the teacher to the students.

By the time students reach middle school, they have prior knowledge related to the concept of “Goal Setting.” This prior knowledge will be accessed when “Goal Setting Activities” are presented during Domain 3. Their understanding of the concept will provide a foundation prior knowledge base for them to build their knowledge related to “Goal Setting.” Students will have a deeper understanding of the importance of setting and working towards goals when discussing other concepts at domain 3.

As they enter Domain 4, students will have had years of exposure to the concept. They will be able to generalize what they have learned about “Goal Setting” into other post-secondary transition activities, such as career paths. The prior knowledge of this transition skill, which has been woven through all four Domains of the student’s transition activities, will enable a student to benefit from transition activities during Domain 4 in a deeper and more meaningful way (Campbell & Campbell, 2008; Woods 2009). By integrating transition activities into each of the grade levels in the target district students with disabilities will develop appropriate skills to transition through school into personally successful, post-secondary activities and environments.

### **Modifications Made to the Preliminary Framework Design**

Several revisions were made to the preliminary framework design based on the data provided through the survey.

One of the primary teachers took the time to write-in the response of, “teaching academics.” It was felt the continued teaching of academics to be understood. However, the teacher’s input led to the incorporation of academics in the design.

Another recommendation proposed by teacher input was the potential benefit of a transition type class being made available to “all” students. One of the teachers stated “In my opinion, all students should have courses available that will help prepare them for adult life. I think courses in social skills (manners), appropriate work expectations, financial planning, medical/insurance information and planning, and the importance of being a productive member of society. Students should be taught skills for being a responsible adult, and for those with disabilities, to be able to achieve the highest degree of personal care and responsibility to help them feel successful as they strive to improve themselves. In these cases, minor accomplishments should be celebrated.”

Another teacher expressed, “Make this transitioning a class which could be offered to all students. Ideally it would be productive with reg. ed. students and students with differences present.”

At this time, this information is not going to be incorporated into the K – 12 Transition Framework. However, this information will be presented to the Director of Exceptional Student Education in the target district for potential growth.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This work utilized data procured through soliciting the perceptions of educators. Future research based on this design should include researching the perceptions of students with disabilities. The perception of students would provide meaningful insight for the design in terms of what activities students found beneficial as they made the transition to post-secondary environments. Future work could include students at the secondary level and students who have exited the K-12 setting.

### **Impact of the Dissertation in Practice Program**

The Dissertation in Practice Program at the University of Central Florida part of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). The Dissertation in Practice is defined on the CPED website as, “...a scholarly endeavor that impacts a complex problem of practice.” (CPED).

The program promotes the investigation of complex problems of practice by practitioners through scholarly means. It promotes the blending of professional knowledge with practical wisdom when working towards solving organizational problems (CPED). This process encourages practitioners to investigate the complex problems within their organizations from the



objective vantage point of a critical lens, but with the common sense wisdom that can only be gained through practice. This program has helped me take a step back when looking at problems in a professional setting. It has encouraged the use and analysis of data, and fostered a deeper thought process of possibilities.

The instructors also guided our cohorts with the spirit of CPED's three habits throughout the program. The three habits, part of the core value of CPED are, "...the habit of mind, teaching to help students understand content; the habit of hand, providing the opportunity to practice what they learn; and the habit of heart, instilling a sense of values and commitment to service" (Shulman, 2006 retrieved, 6/05/2016).

The concept of habit of mind was cultivated through the demands of the coursework provided by the program. At times the "goal post" for acceptable seemed almost fluidly elusive. But for some members of our cohort, the mobile goal for point served to strengthen our commitment to succeed. During particularly difficult courses when completion seemed almost unattainable, a member would remind the cohort of Dr. Gordon's advice our first semester, "...collaborate to graduate." We would press on to meet the expectations. In retrospect, it wasn't as difficult as it seemed at the time ... or was it? Perhaps it seems less daunting in retrospect because that mountain has been climbed and we survived the journey.

The concept of habit of hand was cultivated through the opportunities to make connections to our various home organizations through the Laboratory of Practice and through the capstone of this Dissertation in Practice. The Laboratory of Practice gave students the opportunity to participate in a hands-on internship program by volunteering at their home organization.

During this program, the concept of habit of heart was cultivated through several ways. One way the concept of habit of heart was cultivated was the deep and obvious commitment of the various instructors associated with the Dissertation in Practice Program. Their demand for excellence was unwavering, but pales in comparison to their willingness to accommodate working professionals striving to pursue further education. Modeling excellence by always being prepared and communicating with the student, negotiating timelines to make sure students had the opportunity to produce quality products, and staying after class to meet with multiple people when class had gone into overtime are just a few of the ways the instructors demonstrated habit of heart during the program. Additionally, the concept of habit of heart was woven into much of the curriculum in terms of ethics, volunteerism through Laboratories of Practice, and through the concern for all stakeholders.

### **Integration of Course Work**

Each of the courses taken during this educational journey has made a connection in purpose to further my habit of mind. Each course has helped in some way to contribute to the foundation of my research and prepare me to complete the Dissertation in Practice.

#### **Fall Semester of 2013**

During my first semester, the Fall Semester of 2013, Data, Assessment and Accountability, EDF 7457, helped me to understand the history of assessment at a deeper level. It helped me to begin to refine my use and presentation of data. Facilitating Learning, Development, and Motivation, EDP 7517-13, encouraged me to look at motivation from a different perspective and expand the way I use resources in my classroom. I learned theoretical principles to identify and diagnose causes of motivational gaps and design solutions.

According to Clark and Estes, (2002), motivation, “gets us going, keeps us moving, tells us how much effort to spend on work (and school related) tasks.” Motivational “indices” or processes guide and govern people in work and scholarly efforts. In order to perform gap analysis, I learned to diagnose causes of the gaps and then design and test solutions to close these gaps. I learned to use Clark and Este’s gap analysis model with a focus on motivation to explore these processes.

### **Spring Semester 2014**

During our second semester, the Spring Semester 2014, Dr. David Boote and Dr. Thomas Vitale collaborated to bring the cohort through EDF 7494: Identifying Complex Problems in Practice and EDA 7101: Organizational Theory.

Their primary focus was to introduce the cohort to the formal Gap Analysis process with all four frames. The Gap Analysis process is a systematic type problem-solving approach (Clark & Estes, 2008). It is designed to assist organizations in goal attainment and improving performance by focusing on the variables of knowledge/skill, motivation, and the organization’s structure (Clark & Estes, 2008). The primary steps in the Gap Analysis process are as follows: define goals, determine gaps, hypothesize about possible causes, validate and prioritize causes, develop solutions, and evaluate outcomes (Rueda, 2011). This process must be research-based and systematic. Gaps and goals must be based on valid, empirical data. Potential causes as well as solutions must be grounded in research. Furthermore, solutions must be realistic for their intended environment.

Organizational Theory in Education, EDA 7101, introduced me to the four analytical frames of Structural, Human Resources, Political, and Cultural/Symbolic. Through this course I learned to examine a situation and/or a decision from different vantage points and the need to use

the frames in that examination. This course, combined with Identifying Complex Problems in Practice, EDF 7494, also helped me to become more discerning when previewing published research. It furthered my knowledge regarding sound research methodology and taught me invaluable information regarding surveys and data.

### **Summer Semester 2014**

During the Summer Semester of 2014, I participated in a guided internship through EDG 7947, Laboratory of Practice. My Laboratory of Practice was conducted in a very rural setting, primarily at and for the high school where I teach. However, there was a significant amount of collaboration with the county office. The on-site mentor for My Laboratory of Practice was the new principal who had assumed leadership in the spring of 2013 and brought with him a very hands-on, involved style of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The Laboratory of Practice allowed me to interact with the principal under a variety of parameters. While he presented as a very hands-on administrator with a talent for motivating the people around him; the parameters of the lab of practice allowed me to observe his penchant for allowing people to use their skills to the limits of their ability.

My contributions to the school during the Laboratory of Practice were to access and use grant funding that our school might have lost due to changes in personnel. I was instrumental in using funds to procure, organize, and plan training for core content general education teachers. The training introduced teachers to resources to help them differentiate service delivery for students at various ability levels. They were afforded the opportunity to experience sample assessments, and were provided with updated course standards and the new computerized Instructional Planning Guide for their specific courses. The Laboratory of Practice afforded me

the opportunity to stretch beyond my comfort zone and participate with mainstream educators in a more formal setting.

### **Fall Semester 2014**

During the Fall Semester of 2014, I took EDA 7196 with Dr. Storey. This class dove deep into the theories of contemporary leadership. It taught how sharing leadership and accountability can help an organization develop into a learning organization. It helped me develop my own beliefs about leadership and organizations. This class helped me develop my personal vision of effective leadership.

This was also the semester our cohort began to build a relationship with Dr. Carolyn Walker Hopp, through the course EDF 7478, Analysis of Data for Complex Problems of Practice. During this course, we learned that all problems are opportunities in disguise. We explored complex problems of practice and began to develop a deeper understanding of the context of our individual organizations. We acquired skill in how to examine literature, clarify and articulate our complex problem of practice, examine the how, the why and specifically, the context. We learned to examine work as a situated activity (Gherardi, 2006). We also began exploring how to design a question and how to express a problem in specific terms.

Dr. Hopp also introduced the cohort to a precise method for writing annotated bibliographies. We learned the difference between an abstract and an annotation. We became aware of what constitutes a good annotated bibliography, its purpose, and the importance it can serve.

Dr. Hopp's method for writing annotated bibliographies, combined with some very specific suggestions from Dr. Storey, helped me to mature my skills at written expression in a

more professional direction. The improvement in my writing has been a valuable asset on this journey.

### **Spring Semester 2015**

During the Spring Semester of 2015, the core cohort course was EDF 7468, Evaluation of Complex Problems of Practice. During this course, Dr. Swan guided our educational journey deep into the history and designs of the discipline of the field of evaluation. The project learning activity associated with this course was prodigious, but the connection to the content of the course were direct. Through this class, I expanded my knowledge of evaluation approaches, issues and ethics related to program evaluation, and developed a working understanding of logic models.

Another class taken during the Spring Semester of 2015 was EEX 6065, Programming for Students with Disabilities at the Secondary Level, with Dr. Shelby Robertson. This class covered delivering services to students with disabilities in the areas of academics, social-personal skills, and transition planning. The content, expectations and objectives of this class were tied very closely to the subject matter that would become this Dissertation in Practice. Dr. Robertson exposed students to a plethora of resources and covered significant subject matter in the areas of developing an Individualized Education Plan, considerations regarding academic diversity, and legal foundations for students with disabilities. Through the academic venue of case studies, we explored the tiers of RTI, intervention planning and implementation. During this class we were also given the opportunity to investigate Universal Design for Learning and the range of predictable differences in relation to student need. Since this was an on-line class, after course objectives were met I was allowed to deeply explore the importance of proactively and systematically planning for learner variability. This course provided not only the opportunity to

learn during this semester, but also platforms for research and learning that will continue into the future.

### **Summer Semester of 2015**

During the Summer Semester of 2015, I took the class Proposing and Implementing Data EDG 7985 with Dr. Hopp. During this class, students were introduced to the proposal process, timelines, and the Critical Path concept. We also began studying Positionality and how it weaves through our research. Dr. Hopp also facilitated the investigation of the problems of practice that would become each student's Dissertation in Practice. We revisited the difference between a problem and a situation. We were challenged to define our problems of practice precisely, and then further clarify the definitions. During this class, students began the process of setting up their committees. Students also began researching their precisely defined problems under Dr. Hopp's guidance. This class helped prepare me to write my proposal the following semester.

### **Fall Semester 2015**

During the Fall Semester of 2015, we were introduced to timelines and the proposal process. As a class, we developed a deeper understanding regarding Institutional Review Board submissions. We were introduced to the composition of a Dissertation Committee and the role each member of the committee plays. Each cohort member began developing their proposal for their dissertation committee.

### **Dissertation Hours**

During the Spring Semester of 2016, we reached the research milestone of our journey. This milestone is affectionately referred to as Dissertation Hours. With the guidance of my

Chair, Dr. Carolyn Walker Hopp, I wrote and submitted my IRB, re-wrote my IRB, re-submitted my IRB, received approval and then breathed. Then the real work began. Even in these final semesters, I continued to learn about the process and the writing. I learned about the intricacies of Qualtrics, the nuances of rolling out a survey, and the struggles of eliciting participation. I wrote, I struggled, I edited, I cried, I quit and then I started the process all over again.

This learning process has not been just about education or transition. It has also been about life.



## **APPENDIX A: IRB SUBMISSION**

	<p style="text-align: center;">Institutional Review Board University of Central Florida</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i><b>Human Research Protocol &amp; Instructions (12/2012)</b></i></p>
---	---

**1) Protocol Title**

- Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities

**2) Principal Investigator**

- Clydia. Jenee' DeLaney

**3) Objectives**

**Purpose**

This dissertation in practice will investigate factors related to the transition of students with disabilities (SWD) from the K-12 school environment to adult life in a small north Florida county. It will examine what barriers exist and how the district can best provide the appropriate skills needed for a successful transition process of students with disabilities from the K-12 school setting to post-secondary settings? This action research will inform the body of knowledge regarding the transition of students with disabilities to various postsecondary settings. Additionally, this research will develop suggestions for the Director of Exceptional Student Education, as to what the school district can do to improve the transition of students with disabilities in a small north Florida county from high school to successful and productive adult lives. By improving transition prospects for this population, the research will also serve to improve the graduation rate for students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2002).

The study will include a qualitative exploration of organizational structure for dealing with transition by collecting survey data from stakeholders and qualitative data from interview volunteers. Data collected will inform the body of knowledge and guide the development of a K – 12 Transition Implementation Framework.

- **Research Question/Hypotheses**

The exploratory research question that will inform this complex problem of practice is: How can a school district improve transition service delivery, to better provide the appropriate skills needed, for a successful transition process of students with disabilities from the K-12 school setting to post-secondary settings?

To answer this main evaluation question, this study will also collect data to answer the following sub-questions:

Sub-question, human resource frame:

1. Which employees are held accountable for providing transition services?

Sub-questions, structural frame:

1. What is the organization's structure for providing transition services?

Sub-question, political frame:

1. What resources have been allocated within the organization to support transition services?

- **Plans for data dissemination and usage**

The plan for data and dissemination and usage is to share the results with the administration of Exceptional Student Education Department of Columbia County School District.

#### **4) Background**

If not served effectively, students with disabilities are at risk for dropping out of school and not transitioning into productive adult lives (Newman, Wagner, Huang, Shaver, Knokey, Yu, & Cameto 2011). Additionally, the potential for their successful post-secondary placements are greatly reduced (Newman, et. al., 2011). The ramifications to individual students include reduced chances of higher education, reduced employment opportunities, reduced independent living opportunities, lower standards of living, dependence on public assistance, increased chances of law enforcement involvement, and lower self-esteem (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010; Heppen & Therriault, 2008). Societal ramifications associated with this complex problem include the cost of public assistance, increased need for law enforcement, the societal cost related to delinquent/criminal behavior, cost of incarceration and reduced income tax revenue due to lower or nonexistent salaries from people who could have become productive adults (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001; Bye et al., 2010;). In their 2011 research, Newman, et.al., show correlation regarding students with disabilities being at risk for dropping out of school, and not transitioning into successful post- Heppen & Therriault, 2008secondary placements when not effectively served in school (Newman, et. al., 2011). Conversely, Benz, Lindstrom and Yovanoff (2000) found a high correlation between the completions of student selected transition goals, high school graduation, and subsequent gainful employment. Additionally, they provide evidence of the benefits of providing effective, person centered transition services to students with disabilities (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000). The responsibility of addressing transition goals, on students' Individualized Education Plan's (IEP), is generally the responsibility of the teacher who is that student's IEP sponsor at the school-based site. These teachers have a myriad of responsibilities to their school site, the Office of Exceptional Student Education (ESE), and their students. Currently, in the target district, there is no centralized plan for the transition of students with disabilities integrated into the Exceptional Student Education program.

There are state and federal mandates that require transition services to be tailored to the individual student's needs and goals Flexer, Baer, Luft, & Simmons, 2013, IDEA, 2004). The current revision of IDEA requires the state to submit a State Performance Plan (SPP) and an Annual Performance Report (APR) which provides data on Transition Indicators. Additionally, it legally mandates students to be included in their own Transition Individual Education Plans (TIEP) beginning at age 14. IDEA made post-secondary transition of SWD a priority. The state of Florida has devoted a great deal of resources to facilitate compliance with these transition requirements. The target county has made attempts to take advantage of the available resources and to improve post-secondary transition for students with disabilities. Despite these efforts, SWD continue to drop out of school at rates far exceeding their peers without disabilities at county, state, and national levels (LEA, 2015, Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009).

Baker, M., Sigmon, J., & Nugent, M. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2001). Truancy reduction: Keeping students in school (NCJ-188947 2001-09-00)

Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 509-529.

Bye, L., Alvarez, M., Haynes, J., & Sweigart, C. (2010). Truancy prevention and intervention: A practical guide. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Flexer, R., Baer, Robert M., Luft, P., and Simmons, T. (2013). Transition Planning for

Secondary Students with Disabilities (4th edition). New York, NY: Pearson.

Heppen, J. B., & Therriault, S. B. (2008). Developing early warning systems to identify potential high school dropouts. Issue Brief. National High School Center.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

LEA Profile data retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/contact-us/search.stml?q=LEA+profile>

Newman, L., Wagner, M., Cameto, R., & Knokey, A. M. (2009). The Post-High School Outcomes of Youth With Disabilities up to 4 Years After High School: A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSE 2009-3017. National Center for Special Education Research.

Newman, L., Wagner, M., Huang, T., Shaver, D., Knokey, A. M., Yu, J., & Cameto, R. (2011). Secondary School Programs and Performance of Students with Disabilities: A Special Topic Report of Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSE 2012-3000. National Center for Special Education Research.

## **5) Setting of the Human Research**

The principal investigator has requested and secured permission to use Columbia County School District for this research. Verbal approval has been received from the Director of Exceptional Student Education who can be reached at 386-755-8050. Verbal and written approval has been secured from Terry L. Huddleston, Superintendent of Schools, Columbia County School District. The letter of permission is attached as Exhibit A.

Survey participants will be recruited by an email invitation to all teachers in the district. The invitation will direct willing participants to use the web-based survey service, Qualtrics.

## **6) Resources available to conduct the Human Research**

Not applicable

The principal investigator and sole researcher for this study is currently enrolled in EDG7987 at the University of Central Florida as part of a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) Program. This study is a requirement of that program and the principal investigator will be supervised by the dissertation chair, Dr. Carolyn Hopp. The Department Chair review is Dr. Mike Hynes. The research will be conducted in Columbia County School District in Columbia County, Florida.

## **7) Study Design**

This study is a mixed-method designed consisting of the quantitative analysis of survey data and the analysis of qualitative data gleaned from interviews

### **a) Recruitment Methods**

#### **Survey**

To recruit the participants, the researcher will send out an invitation to all teachers in the target district (725 teachers, 120 others i.e. administrators and support personnel), via Email. This contact will include a description of a study and its purpose, along with an invitation to participate in the study. Should any potential study participant decline to

participate in a study, their e-mail address will be taken off the list. Potential study participants, who respond to accept the invitation, will be sent an e-mail thanking them for their participation. This email will include instructions and a hyper-link that will take them to the appropriate forms and disclosures. Upon their completion of the forms participants will be provided a hyper-link to the Qualtrics survey.

Sub-populations to be identified in the survey sample include administration (elementary, middle school, high school & district), teachers (elementary, middle school, & high school), and ESE teachers (elementary, middle school, & high school). A copy of the recruitment email is attached as Exhibit B.

## **Interview**

Volunteers will be recruited to be interviewed through a question on the survey. Any respondent on the survey who volunteers to be interviewed will be first contacted via Email. This contact will include a description of the study, its purpose, and an inquiry as to their continued interest to be interviewed. Volunteers responding to the first contact will be placed into categories via grade level sub-groups. Depending on the number of volunteers, a random sample of each sub-group will be sent invitations to be interviewed. The goal is to interview a cross grade sample of teachers. Teachers will be offered an opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed through a question in the survey. A copy of the recruitment email is attached as Exhibit C.



A minimum of 9 maximum of 30 interview participants would be preferable. The interview participants will be drawn from the survey participants so the total number of participants will be 845 or less.

**b) Participant Compensation**

Not applicable

**c) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The study will screen for eligibility by verifying the names on the list of potential candidates are teachers. All participants are adults over the age of 18 and none of them fall in the category of prisoners.

**d) Study Endpoints**

- Not applicable

**e) Study Timelines**

The estimated duration of the research is three months, from February 2016 –

May 2016

**f) Procedures involved in the Human Research.**

**Survey**

An Internet web survey will be created using Qualtrics. An invitation to

participate will be sent out to the identified e-mail list. If a participant agrees to take the survey, a link will guide them to the survey. Qualtrics will facilitate data collection. Upon completion of the survey an automated e-mail will be sent thanking a participant. The survey protocol is attached as Exhibit D.

This survey is adapted from the survey used for Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida, by Joyce H. Lubbers, Jeanne B. Repetto and Susan P. McGorray. Permission to use and to modify their survey is attached as Exhibit E.

## **Interviews**

Any face-to-face interviews will be held at a neutral site convenient to the participating teachers. Participants have the option of using a pre-arranged conference room at Ft. White High School which allows for a confidential and private discussion. The participants will be advised of the nature of the study and the goals of the researcher. The researcher will review the informed consent process and asked the participants two agreed to the waiver of documentation of consent prior to the interview.

The interviewer will audio record the interview and will take brief handwritten notes during the discussion on a protocol document. After the session ends, the interviewer will prepare a report documenting the interview and recording the thematic responses of the interview subject. After all interviews are complete, the reports will be

prepared for interpretation and coded according to thematic responses. The interview protocol is attached as Exhibit F.

**g) Data management**

**Interview Protocol**

The interviewer will not disclose the identity of the participants but will use pseudonyms throughout the report. All data collected will be secured both electronically and physically.

**Survey Protocol**

Surveys will not disclose the identity of the participants but will be anonymous. All data collected will be secured both electronically and physically.

**h) Provisions to monitor the data for the safety of participants**

- Not applicable

**i) Withdrawal of participants**

- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time

**8) Risks to participants**

- The identity of participants will be confidential, therefore the risk is minimal.

**9) Potential direct benefits to participants**

- There is no direct benefit to participants. Potential benefits to participants include sharing in the collective information gathered and allowing it to inform their practice.

#### **10) Provisions to protect the privacy interests of participants**

- Interviews will be held at a neutral site convenient to the participating teachers. Teachers will not be asked to identify themselves by name and will be assigned a number that only indicates their grade level of expertise i.e. E3 for a teacher with three years of elementary experience M5 for a teacher with five years of experience at the middle school level.

The surveys will be conducted via Qualtrics. The survey will be anonymous and only the researcher will be able to access the web survey account.

#### **11) Provisions to maintain the confidentiality of data**

- The names of the respondents will be confidential and only known to the researcher. Each respondent will be assigned a numerical alias and data will only be reported with the alias. The matching document of names to aliases will be protected as confidential by the researcher in a secure database.

#### **12) Medical care and compensation for injury**

- Not applicable

#### **13) Cost to participants**

- Not applicable

#### **14) Consent process**

- Prior to starting the survey, the participants will be advised of the nature of the study and the goals of the researcher in an introductory e-mail. If the email survey candidate agrees to complete the survey, the informed consent process will appear as the first page of the web survey. The participants will be asked to agree to the waiver of documentation of consent prior to continuing on to the survey. If the survey candidate declines to consent, the web form will not allow them to continue with the survey. A message will thank them and explain consent is required.

#### **15) Process to document consent in writing**

- Prior to an interview, the consent forms will be presented to the participant's to read, ask questions and keep for their records. Participants can decide whether or not to continue with the interview.

The first page of the survey will be the informed consent document and included will be a check box asking for agreement and consent.

**16) Vulnerable populations**

- Not applicable

**17) Drugs or Devices**

- Not applicable

**18) Multi-site Human Research**

- Not applicable

**19) Sharing of results with participants**

- The results will be shared with all participants and with the administration of Exceptional Student Education Department of Columbia County School District.

EXHIBIT A OF IRB SUBMISSION DISTRICT APPROVAL

**COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

372 WEST DUVAL STREET  
LAKE CITY, FLORIDA 32055-3990  
(386) 755-8000 FAX (386) 755-8029

**TERRY L. HUDDLESTON**  
SUPERINTENDENT

**NARRAGANSETT M. SMITH**  
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT



Touching Tomorrow Through Teamwork Today

**MEMBERS OF THE BOARD**

DANA BRADY-GIDDENS

STEPHANIE K. FINNELL

DANNY GREEN

KEITH HUDSON

STEVE NELSON

December 1, 2015

Institutional Review Board  
University of Central Florida  
Orlando, FL

Dear Sir or Madam,

Please be advised that Jenée Delaney has my permission to conduct a Dissertation in Practice, in the Columbia County School District. If I can be of further assistance please contact me at (386) 755-8003 or [huddlestont@columbiak12.com](mailto:huddlestont@columbiak12.com).

Sincerely,

  
Terry L. Huddleston, Superintendent of Schools

## EXHIBIT B SURVEY RECRUITMENT INVITATION E-MAIL

Dear Fellow Columbia County School Board Employee,

My name is Jenee' DeLaney; some of you may know me as a teacher at Ft. White High School. I have returned to school to further my education. I am attending University of Central Florida, 12494 University Boulevard, Orlando, Florida 32816. Currently I am working on my dissertation the focus of which is Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities.

You are being recruited to participate in this research study based on your experience in education. Your opinion is valuable to my research. I am asking you to complete a survey. The survey will be conducted via the internet through Qualtrix and can be done at your convenience. For this project, any teacher in CCSD is eligible to participate in this survey. It should take you no more than twenty minutes to complete the anonymous survey on line. Thank you for your consideration.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact Dr. Carolyn Hopp ([Carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu](mailto:Carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu)) or Jenee' DeLaney ([delaneyjenee@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:delaneyjenee@knights.ucf.edu)).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

Please find the hyper link to the survey to the right.      [ANONYMOUS SURVEY LINK](#)

Thank you in advance for your help!

Best Regards,

Jenee' DeLaney

## EXHIBIT C INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT INVITATION E-MAIL

Dear Colleague,

My name is Jeneé DeLaney; you may know me as a teacher at Ft. White High School. I have returned to school to further my education. I am attending University of Central Florida, 12494 University Boulevard, Orlando, Florida 32816. Currently I am working on my dissertation the focus of which is Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities.

You are being recruited to participate in this research study based on your level of experience in education and volunteering through the survey related to this research. For this project, any instructional employee is eligible to participate in the interview. Participants will be selected via random sample of the volunteers responding to this email. The interview should take between 30 to 45 minutes.

All participants' identities will be kept confidential. The interviewer will not disclose the identity of the participants but will use pseudonyms throughout the report. All data collected will be secured on a computer that is password protected. When the computer is not in use by the principal investigator, it is stored in a locked cabinet.

The interviews will be held at a prearranged conference area which allows for confidential and private discussion.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact Dr. Carolyn Hopp ([Carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu](mailto:Carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu)) or Jeneé DeLaney ([delaneyjenee@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:delaneyjenee@knights.ucf.edu)).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

Thank you in advance for your help!

Best Regards,  
Jeneé DeLaney



## **EXHIBIT D SURVEY**

This survey is adapted from the survey used for Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida, by Joyce H. Lubbers, Jeanne B. Repetto and Susan P. McGorray.

Permission to use and to modify their survey is attached as Exhibit D.

The program Qualtrics will be used to administer the survey and evaluate survey data. Qualtrics allows the employment of skip logic, which will be employed during the administration of this survey.

1. Which best describes your duties?  
☐ Instructional  
☐ Support  
☐ Administrative
2. Which best describes your duties?  
☐ General Education  
☐ Special Education  
☐ Combination
3. What grade level applies to your current professional situation?
  - A. High school only
  - B. Middle school only
  - C. Elementary only
  - D. Combination High School/Middle School
  - E. Combination High School/Middle School/Elementary

4. What transition training have you received? Select all that apply.
- ☐ Self-determination (including Dare to Dream, Self-directed IEP's, etc.)
  - ☐ Developing Quality Transition IEP's
  - ☐ Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCPs)
  - ☐ Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment (CBVA)
  - ☐ Supported Employment
  - ☐ Community Based Instruction
  - ☐ Interagency Collaboration
  - ☐ Dealing with Differences
  - ☐ Social Security Work Incentives
  - ☐ Diploma Options
  - ☐ Transfer of Rights
  - ☐ Facilitating Parent/Student Involvement
  - ☐ Other (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What transition training would you like to receive?
- ☐ Self-determination (including Dare to Dream, Self-directed IEP's, etc.)
  - ☐ Developing Quality Transition IEP's
  - ☐ Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCPs)
  - ☐ Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment (CBVA)
  - ☐ Supported Employment
  - ☐ Community Based Instruction
  - ☐ Interagency Collaboration
  - ☐ Dealing with Differences
  - ☐ Social Security Work Incentives
  - ☐ Diploma Options
  - ☐ Transfer of Rights
  - ☐ Facilitating Parent/Student Involvement
  - ☐ Dare to Dream/Adult
  - ☐ Accommodations/Modifications in Vocational and Adult Education
  - ☐ Career development/planning for students with disabilities
  - ☐ Other (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. What percentage of your teaching time is dedicated to the roles listed below:
- A. \_\_\_\_\_% - General Academic Skills

- B. \_\_\_\_\_% - Work experience coordination
- C. \_\_\_\_\_% - Vocational Skills
- D. \_\_\_\_\_% - Special Education Services

7. At your school, is time allocated to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
8. Do you have resources available to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

#### SKIP LOGIC

9. Do you know how to access resources to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
10. What resources do you have available to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?

---

11. Do you consider this/these resource user friendly?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

12. Are you teaching transition skills to students with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

13. Do you have enough time to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

14. At which grade level do you have the most experience?

- A. Primary Grades Pre-K – 2nd
- B. Elementary Grades 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>
- C. Middle Grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>
- D. High School Grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>

#### SKIP LOGIC

15. How many years experience do you have with students at the Primary Grade Level?

- 3 years or less
- 4 – 14 years
- 15 years or more

16. How many years experience do you have with students at the Elementary Grade Level?

- 3 years or less
- 4 – 14 years
- 15 years or more

17. How many years experience do you have with students at the Middle Grade Level?

- 3 years or less
- 4 – 14 years
- 15 years or more

18. How many years experience do you have with students at the High School Grade Level?

- 3 years or less
- 4 – 14 years
- 15 years or more

#### SKIP LOGIC

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input as to which transition skills should be taught at the Primary Grade Level.

19. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Primary Grade Level?

- ☐ celebrating success
- ☐ embracing differences

- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills
- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration
- \_\_\_ Interest inventories
- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities
- \_\_\_ IEP self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ Responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Disability rights
- \_\_\_ Transition planning
- \_\_\_ Goal attainment planning
- \_\_\_ Laws and use
- \_\_\_ Career paths

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input as to which transition skills should be taught at the Elementary Grade Level

20. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Elementary Grade Level?

- \_\_\_ celebrating success

- \_\_\_ embracing differences
- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills
- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration
- \_\_\_ Interest inventories
- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities
- \_\_\_ IEP self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ Responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Disability rights
- \_\_\_ Transition planning
- \_\_\_ Goal attainment planning
- \_\_\_ Laws and use
- \_\_\_ Career paths

Due to your level of experience we would like your input as to which transition skills should be taught at or prior to the Middle Grade Level

21. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities prior to the Middle Grade Level?

- \_\_\_ celebrating success
- \_\_\_ embracing differences
- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills

- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration
- \_\_\_ Interest inventories
- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities
- \_\_\_ IEP self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ Responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Disability rights
- \_\_\_ Transition planning
- \_\_\_ Goal attainment planning
- \_\_\_ Laws and use
- \_\_\_ Career paths

22. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Middle Grade Level?

- \_\_\_ celebrating success
- \_\_\_ embracing differences
- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills
- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration
- \_\_\_ Interest inventories

- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities
- \_\_\_ IEP self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ Responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Disability rights
- \_\_\_ Transition planning
- \_\_\_ Goal attainment planning
- \_\_\_ Laws and use
- \_\_\_ Career paths

Due to your level of experience we would like your input as to which transition skills should be taught at or prior to the High School Level.

23. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities prior to the High School Level?

- \_\_\_ celebrating success
- \_\_\_ embracing differences
- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills
- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration



- \_\_\_ Interest inventories
- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities
- \_\_\_ IEP self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ Responsibilities
- \_\_\_ Disability rights
- \_\_\_ Transition planning
- \_\_\_ Goal attainment planning
- \_\_\_ Laws and use
- \_\_\_ Career paths

24. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the High School Level?

- \_\_\_ celebrating success
- \_\_\_ embracing differences
- \_\_\_ self-efficacy skills
- \_\_\_ Disability exploration
- \_\_\_ self-advocacy
- \_\_\_ introduce goal setting
- \_\_\_ introduce career exploration
- \_\_\_ Interest inventories
- \_\_\_ Aptitude exploration
- \_\_\_ Career exploration
- \_\_\_ Goal setting activities

- ☐ IEP self-advocacy
- ☐ Responsibilities
- ☐ Disability rights
- ☐ Transition planning
- ☐ Goal attainment planning
- ☐ Laws and use
- ☐ Career paths

25. Please share any transition resources that you have found to be user friendly and the grade level you think they should be used.

---



---

26. Please share any barriers you experience in trying to teach transition skills to students with disabilities.

---



---

27. What would help you implement teaching transition skills?

---



---

28. Are career/employment/vocational evaluation services available to your students?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

29. Are evaluation systems used for students in your county for transition assessment?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Please list the evaluation systems used for students in your county for transition assessment.

---



---

30. Does your school district have a formal written transition planning process?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

31. Does your school district have a transition manual (or section of a manual) for use in the transition process?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

32. How satisfied are you with? One star equals very dissatisfied and ten stars equals very satisfied.

1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8          9          10

33. Would you be willing to participate in a survey via phone or in person if your identity is kept confidential?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

34. If you have indicated that you are willing to participate in a confidential interview please provide your contact information in the space below.

#### SKIP LOGIC

35. What effective practices do you think facilitate the transition process?

---

---

36. What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?

---

---

37. What suggestions do you have for improvement of the transition process?

---

---

38. What curricular supports would assist you in supporting student transition needs?

---

---

39. What type of training do you need?

---

---

40. Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers have been recorded for research purposes and your identity is anonymous and not available to the researcher.

## PERMISSION FROM DR. REPETTO TO USE AND TO MODIFY T-PAS SURVEY



## EXHIBIT F INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

DATA	Interview Questions	Probes
Orientation  Ice breaker	Please tell me about you as a professional, your background and your current teaching position.  Please tell me about you as a professional, your background and your current teaching position.	Education  Number of years at Current grade level  Previous experience
General knowledge	Please tell me about you understanding of working with students with disabilities.	
	What experiences have you had in working with students with disabilities?	Para professionals  Inclusion  Disabilities of students
Accountability  Structure  Resources	Please tell me what you know about how the district assists students with disabilities as they progress through K-12 setting to adult life?	District plan  Who  Activities  Grade level(s)  What resources available?
Structure  Resources	What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?	Resources accessible?  Resources appropriate.  Resources user friendly?  Time issues?
	What effective practices do you think facilitate the post-secondary transition process for SWD?	Resources
	What suggestions do you have for improvement of the transition process?	

## EXHIBIT G HRP-502A CONSENT TRANSITION



### Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities

#### Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s): C. Jenee' DeLaney

Faculty Supervisor: *Dr. Carolyn Hopp*

Investigational Site(s): *Columbia County School District  
Lake City, Florida 32025*

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 800 people in the North Florida area. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a member of the educational community. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Jenee DeLaney, a student in the Doctor of Education program at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by *Dr. Carolyn Hopp* a UCF faculty member in the EdD program.

#### What you should know about a research study:

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.

- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate organizational factors contributing to Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to participate in an on-line survey designed to explore your perceptions about Post-Secondary Transition services for students with disabilities. You do not have to answer every question or complete every task.

**Location:**

- Surveys will be done anonymously, via the internet, using Qualtrics.

**Time required:**

- The internet surveys should take approximately 12 minutes.

**Compensation or payment:**

There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Anonymous research:** This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Dr. Carolyn Hopp, Faculty Supervisor in the College of Education at UCF (Email at [carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu](mailto:carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu)).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

## EXHIBIT H HRP-502A CONSENT TRANSITION INTERVIEW



### Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s): C. Jenee' DeLaney

Faculty Supervisor: *Dr. Carolyn Hopp*

Investigational Site(s): *Columbia County School District  
Lake City, Florida 32025*

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 800 people in the North Florida area. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a member of the educational community. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Jenee DeLaney, a student in the Doctor of Education program at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by *Dr. Carolyn Hopp* a UCF faculty member in the EdD program.

#### **What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate organizational factors contributing to Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities.



**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to participate in an interview either face-to-face or via electronic means designed to explore your perceptions about Post-Secondary Transition services for students with disabilities. You do not have to answer every question or complete every task.

**Location:**

- Interviews will be done confidentially face-to-face, or either via phone at the participants request. The researcher will go to a pre-arranged conference area to allow for privacy and confidentiality.

**Time required:**

- It is expected expect you will be in this research study for three weeks. Interviews which will be schedule at a time convenient to the participants, and are expected to take no more than 45 minutes. A report of the researcher's interpretation of your responses will be developed . You may request for this report will be shared with you, for your feedback on accuracy.

**Audio or video taping:**

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will *not* be able to be in the interview portion of this study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed when research is complete, expected date, July 1, 2016

**Compensation or payment:**

There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:** We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Dr. Carolyn Hopp, Faculty Supervisor in the College of Education at UCF (Email at [carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu](mailto:carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu)).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

## **APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Clydia DeLaney**

Date: **March 04, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/04/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities
Investigator:	Clydia DeLaney
IRB Number:	SBE-16-12067
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/04/2016 04:38:54 PM EST

IRB Manager

## **APPENDIX C: LEA DOCUMENT**



**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

## **2015 LEA Profile**

**Pam Stewart  
Commissioner**

### **Introduction**

District:	Enrollment Group:	PK-12 Population:	Percent Disabled:
Columbia	7,000 to 20,000	10,186	15%

The LEA profile is intended to provide districts with a tool for use in planning for systemic improvement in exceptional education programs. The profile contains a series of data indicators that describe measures of educational benefit, educational environment, prevalence, parent involvement and provides information about **district performance as compared to state level targets in Florida's State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR)**. Required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the SPP/APR for 2013-2018 contains historical data and targets for 16 indicators along with a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). During the six-year period, Florida will annually submit progress reports for each indicator as well as the SSIP. As part of the process, Florida publicly reports data for both the state and each local education agency.

Data in the LEA profile are presented for the district and the state. Where appropriate and available, comparative data for enrollment group and/or general education students are included. Indicators in **bold** are part of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report.

Data presented as indicators of educational benefit (*Section One*)

- **Federal uniform high school graduation rate**
- Standard diploma graduation rate
- **Federal dropout rate for students with disabilities**
- Florida dropout rate
- **Postschool outcome data**

*Note: Statewide assessment data for both preschool and school age students are published separately in the winter of each year.*

Data presented as indicators of educational environment (*Section Two*)

- **Students with disabilities ages 6-21 by placement setting**
- **Children with disabilities ages 3-5 by placement setting**
- **Part C to Part B transition**
- **Secondary Transition IEPs**
- **Students with disabilities suspended/expelled for more than 10 days in a school year**

Data presented as indicators of prevalence (*Section Three*)

- **Evaluations completed within 60 days**
- Student membership by race/ethnicity
- **Risk ratios of racial/ethnic groups identified as disabled**

Data presented as an indicator of parent involvement (*Section Four*)

- **Survey of parent perceptions**

Selected State Performance Plan indicators (*Section Five*)

- **Summary information on selected state performance plan indicators**
- **State level targets**
- **District level data**

#### **Data Sources and Reporting**

The data contained in this profile were obtained from data submitted electronically by districts through the Department of Education Information Database in surveys 2 and 5, parent survey submissions, the Florida self-assessment monitoring system, the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), and through the Department of Health (DOH) Early Steps program.

Data contained in Section One through Section Four are rounded to the nearest whole number. Because rounding is not used in determining if SPP targets have been met, data in Section Five contain all decimal places.

#### **Districts in Enrollment Group:**

Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, Flagler, Hendry, Highlands, Indian River, Martin, Monroe, Nassau, Putnam, Sumter, Walton

## **Section One: Educational Benefit**

Educational benefit refers to the extent to which children benefit from their educational experience. Progression through and completion of school are dimensions of educational benefit as are postschool outcomes. This section of the profile provides data on indicators of school completion, and postschool outcomes.

#### **Federal Uniform High School Graduation Rate:**

The number of first-time ninth graders from four years ago, plus incoming transfer students on the same schedule to graduate, minus students from this population who transferred out or left to enroll in a private school or home education divided into the number of standard diploma graduates from the same group. The resulting percentages are reported for **2011-12 through 2013-14** for students with disabilities and all students.

#### **Student with Disabilities**

	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
<b>Columbia</b>	31%	42%	42%
<b>Enrollment Group</b>	49%	52%	53%
<b>State</b>	48%	52%	55%

#### **All Students**

	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
<b>Columbia</b>	65%	66%	61%
<b>Enrollment Group</b>	76%	77%	76%
<b>State</b>	74%	76%	76%

#### **Standard Diploma Graduation Rate:**

The number of standard diploma graduates divided by the number of students with disabilities who completed their education (received either a standard diploma, GED, special diploma, certificate of completion or special certificate of completion) or dropped out. This graduation rate is calculated based on the total number of students with disabilities who exited school in a given year, rather than using the four-year cohort model described in the federal uniform graduation rate. The data are reported for the three year period from **2011-12 through 2013-14**.

**Standard Diploma Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	36%	54%	58%
Enrollment Group	53%	61%	57%
State	52%	58%	60%

**Federal Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities:**

The number of students who exited special education due to dropping out, divided by the number of students who graduated with a regular high school diploma, special diploma, certificate of completion, special certificate of completion, dropped out or died. The resulting percentages are reported for students with disabilities, students identified as emotionally/behaviorally disabled (EBD) and students identified as specific learning disabled (SLD) for the years **2011-12** through **2013-14**.

**Federal Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	4%	5%	5%
Enrollment Group	19%	17%	17%
State	21%	20%	19%

**Federal Dropout Rate for EBD Students**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	<1%	20%	<1%
Enrollment Group	32%	34%	37%
State	42%	43%	39%

**Federal Dropout Rate for SLD Students**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	7%	2%	7%
Enrollment Group	21%	16%	18%
State	22%	21%	19%

**Florida Dropout Rate:**

The number of students grades 9-12 for whom a dropout withdrawal reason (DNE, W05, W11, W13-W23) was reported, divided by the total enrollment of grades 9-12 students and students who did not enter school as expected (DNEs) as reported at the end of the school year (survey 5). The resulting percentages are reported for **2011-12 through 2013-14** for students with disabilities and all students.

**Florida Dropout Rate for Students with Disabilities**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	<1%	<1%	<1%
Enrollment Group	3%	3%	3%
State	3%	4%	3%

**Florida Dropout Rate for All Students**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	<1%	<1%	<1%
Enrollment Group	2%	2%	<1%
State	2%	2%	2%

**Postschool Outcome Data:**

The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) is an interagency data collection system that obtains follow-up data on former students. The most recent FETPIP data available reports on students who exited Florida public schools during the **2012-13** school year. The table below displays percentage of students with disabilities exiting school in **2010-11** through **2012-13** who were found during the fall/winter following the school year and were (1) enrolled in higher education, (2)

---

**LEA Profile 2015**

enrolled in higher education or competitively employed, and (3) enrolled in higher education or some other postsecondary education or training program or competitively employed or employed in some other employment.

**Students with Disabilities in Higher Education**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Columbia	14%	19%	19%
Enrollment Group	24%	26%	26%
State	27%	27%	28%

**Students with Disabilities in Higher Education/Competitively Employed**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Columbia	31%	32%	38%
Enrollment Group	39%	41%	37%
State	39%	38%	42%

**Students with Disabilities in any Employment or Continuing Education**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Columbia	49%	46%	53%
Enrollment Group	52%	54%	46%
State	52%	50%	54%

## Section Two: Educational Environment

Indicators related to educational environment address the extent to which students with disabilities receive special education with their nondisabled peers, timely transition from Part C programs to Part B programs, secondary transition IEPs, and risk ratios of out-of-school suspensions/expulsions for students with disabilities when compared to nondisabled peers.

**Regular Class, Resource Room, Separate Class Placement, and Other Separate Environments, Ages 6-21:**

The number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 in regular class, resource room, separate class, and other separate environment, divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 6-21 reported October (survey 2). Regular class includes students who spend 80% or more of their school week with nondisabled peers. Resource room includes students spending between 40% and 80% of their school week with nondisabled peers. Separate class includes students spending less than 40% of their week with nondisabled peers. Other separate environment includes students served in public or private separate schools, residential placements or hospital/homebound placements. The resulting percentages are reported for the three years from **2012-13** through **2014-15**. Students served in corrections facilities and students enrolled by their parents in private schools who are receiving special education and/or related services from the LEA are not included in this calculation.

**Regular Class**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	66%	70%	75%
Enrollment Group	68%	67%	69%
State	71%	71%	74%

**Resource Room**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	10%	8%	4%
Enrollment Group	14%	15%	14%
State	11%	10%	9%



**Separate Class**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	24%	22%	20%
Enrollment Group	15%	15%	14%
State	14%	15%	13%

**Other Separate Environment**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	<1%	<1%	<1%
Enrollment Group	3%	4%	4%
State	4%	4%	4%

If an additional calculation reveals that students with disabilities ages 6-21 of any race are at least 3.5 times more likely to be placed in a separate class or other separate environment when compared to all other races combined, the district will be required to set aside IDEA funds for coordinated early intervening services.

**Early Childhood Education Settings, Ages 3-5:**

The number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 attending a regular early childhood program or kindergarten and receiving the majority of special education and related services *inside* the regular early childhood program; attending a regular early childhood program or kindergarten and receiving the special education program (separate class, separate school, or residential facility); or served in another separate environment (home or service provider location) divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages 3-5 reported in October (survey 2). Students attending a regular early childhood program or kindergarten are those who spend any time in a program that includes at least 50% nondisabled children. The resulting percentages are reported for **2012-13** through **2014-15**.

**Regular Early Childhood Program or Kindergarten Receiving Services Inside the Classroom**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	7%	2%	16%
Enrollment Group	30%	29%	31%
State	27%	28%	27%

**Regular Early Childhood Program or Kindergarten Receiving Services Outside the Classroom**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	13%	<1%	6%
Enrollment Group	16%	17%	24%
State	17%	17%	18%

**Separate Class, Separate School, or Residential Facility**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	80%	97%	76%
Enrollment Group	49%	49%	41%
State	51%	51%	51%

**Home or Service Provider Location**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Columbia	<1%	1%	2%
Enrollment Group	4%	4%	4%
State	4%	3%	4%

**Part C to Part B Transition:**

The number of children referred for eligibility determination by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays, divided by the number of children served in Part C and referred to Part B for eligibility determination (not including

---

**LEA Profile 2015**

children determined to be ineligible for Part B prior to age 3 or children for whom parent refusal to provide consent caused delays in evaluation or initial services). The resulting percentages are reported for **2011-12** through **2013-14**.

**IEP Developed and Implemented by 3rd Birthday**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	100%	100%	100%
State	99%	100%	100%

**Secondary Transition IEPs:**

The percentage of compliant transition IEPs are calculated by dividing (a) the number of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs by (b) the number of youth with an IEP age 16 and above. The resulting percentages are reported for **2011-12** through **2013-14**.

**Transition IEPs Found Compliant**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	100%	67%	0%
State	91%	91%	89%

**Discipline Rates and Risk Ratios:**

Discipline rates for students with disabilities and nondisabled students are calculated by dividing the number of students who received out-of-school suspensions or expulsions totaling more than 10 days by total-year enrollment as reported at the end of the school year (survey 5). The risk ratio is calculated by dividing the discipline rate of students with disabilities by the discipline rate of nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that students with disabilities and nondisabled students are equally likely to be suspended/expelled. The resulting rates are reported for students with disabilities and nondisabled students for three years from **2011-12** through **2013-14** along with risk ratios for students with disabilities.

**Students with Disabilities Suspended/Expelled For Greater than 10 Days**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	3%	3%	3%
State	1%	<1%	<1%

**Nondisabled Students Suspended/Expelled For Greater than 10 Days**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	2%	1%	1%
State	<1%	<1%	<1%

**Discipline Risk Ratios**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	1.89	2.57	2.07
State	1.34	1.21	1.43

Discipline risk ratios by racial/ethnic group are calculated for students with disabilities by dividing the discipline rate of a specific racial/ethnic group by the rate of all nondisabled students. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates that, for instance, Hispanic students with disabilities are equally likely to be suspended/expelled as all nondisabled students. The resulting risk ratios are reported for students with disabilities by race/ethnicity for the state and district during the **2013-14** school year. Blank cells indicate that there are less than 10 students with disabilities for a specific racial/ethnic group suspended/expelled for greater than 10 days.

**Discipline Risk Ratios by Race/Ethnicity**

	State	District
White	0.81	1.47
Black	2.92	4.27
Hispanic	1.03	
Asian		
American Indian/Alaskan Native		
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island		
Two or more races	1.60	

If an additional calculation reveals that incidents of removal of students with disabilities of any race through in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion are at least 3.5 times more likely to occur when compared to all other races combined, the district will be required to set aside IDEA funds for coordinated early intervening services.

**Section Three: Prevalence**

Indicators relative to the prevalence of students with disabilities include the percentage of students evaluated within 60 days, student membership by racial/ethnic category, and risk ratios of racial/ethnic groups being identified as disabled.

**Evaluation within 60 Days:**

The number of students who were evaluated within 60 days of receipt of parent consent divided by the total number of students with parental consent to evaluate in a given school year as reported via school district survey. The data are reported for **2011-12** through **2013-14**.

**Students Evaluated within 60 Days of Receipt of Parent Consent**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Columbia	100%	99%	99%
Enrollment Group	99%	99%	99%
State	99%	99%	99%

**Student Membership by Racial/Ethnic Category:**

Racial/ethnic membership data for all students and students with disabilities are presented for the state and district as reported in **October 2014** (survey 2).

**All Students**

	State	District
White	40%	67%
Black	23%	21%
Hispanic	31%	5%
Asian	3%	1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	<1%	<1%
Two or more races	3%	5%

**Students with Disabilities**

	State	District
White	40%	65%
Black	26%	23%
Hispanic	29%	6%
Asian	1%	<1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	<1%	<1%
Two or more races	3%	5%

**Selected Disabilities by Racial/Ethnic Category:**

Racial/ethnic data for students with a primary disability of SLD, EBD, and intellectually disabled (IND) are presented for the state and district as reported in **October 2014** (survey 2).

**SLD, EBD, and IND Students**

	State SLD	District SLD	State EBD	District EBD	State IND	District IND
White	37%	63%	37%	61%	33%	55%
Black	26%	30%	39%	36%	38%	31%
Hispanic	33%	4%	19%	<1%	24%	7%
Asian	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	2%	<1%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Two or more races	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	6%

**Risk Ratios For Students Placed in Exceptional Education:**

The risk that students of a given race will be identified as a student with a disability or a student in selected disability categories when compared to students of all other races. A risk ratio of 1.0 indicates the students of a given race are equally likely as all other races combined to be identified as disabled. The data are presented for all students with a disability, students who are identified as IND, EBD, or SLD, and students who are identified as having autism spectrum disorder (ASD), speech or language impairments (SI-LI), other health impaired, or homebound or hospitalized (OHI-HH). The data are presented for the district and the state as reported in **October 2014** (survey 2). A blank cell indicates less than 30 students of a specific race/ethnicity with the given disability.

**State**

	IND	EBD	ASD	SI-LI	OHI-HH	SLD	All Disabled
White	0.75	0.91	1.21	1.24	1.33	0.88	1.02
Black	2.03	2.10	0.71	1.06	0.94	1.26	1.16
Hispanic	0.73	0.54	1.03	0.78	0.86	1.08	0.92
Asian	0.61	0.10	1.03	0.65	0.28	0.30	0.50
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.11	0.75	0.81	0.97	1.08	1.21	1.04
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island			0.79	0.80		0.62	0.71
Two or more races	0.76	1.19	1.06	1.06	0.97	0.85	0.95

**District**

	IND	EBD	ASD	SI-LI	OHI-HH	SLD	All Disabled
White	0.60	0.75	1.20	1.03	1.10	0.83	0.93
Black	1.67			0.94	0.94	1.69	1.13
Hispanic							1.02
Asian							
American Indian/Alaskan Native							
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island							
Two or more races							1.10

Any risk ratio for students placed in exceptional education or placed in programs for SLD, IND, EBD, ASD, OHI, or SI-LI that is at least 3.5, will result in the district being required to set aside IDEA funds for coordinated early intervening services.

## Section Four: Parent Involvement

### Parent Survey:

The parent involvement rate is the number of parents who perceive that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities, divided by the total number of responding parents. These data are reported for parents of preschool children with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities in grades K-12 for **2011-12** through **2013-14**.

#### Preschool

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<b>Columbia</b>	77%	83%	60%
<b>Enrollment Group</b>	60%	77%	61%
<b>State</b>	54%	76%	73%

#### Grades K-12

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<b>Columbia</b>	63%	94%	75%
<b>Enrollment Group</b>	47%	80%	46%
<b>State</b>	43%	75%	76%

## Section Five: Selected State Performance Plan Indicators

The following table includes selected state performance plan indicators, the state targets for 2013-14 for these indicators, district data, and whether or not the district met the target. State targets are presented in **bold**. Because rounding is not used in determining if targets have been met, LEA data contain as many decimal places as needed to determine if the target has been met. If, for example, 3.27% of students with disabilities in a given district drop out of school, the district will not be considered as having met the target of 3.25%. For indicators 4, 9, and 10, an "N" in the Target Met column means that a district's data contributed to Florida not making the state target. For indicators 1, 2, and 4, the data lag one year, meaning that data are from the 2012-13 school year, although more recent data may also be found in this profile.

Indicator	2013-14 State-Level Target	LEA Data	Target Met
1. Graduation rate	The percentage of students graduating with a standard diploma in 2012-13 will increase to <b>54.3%</b> .	42.00%	N
2. Dropout Rate	The dropout rate for students with disabilities in 2012-13 will decrease to <b>18.6%</b> .	4.76%	Y
3. Participation and performance of children with disabilities on statewide assessments	<b>99%</b> of students with disabilities in grades three through ten will participate in statewide assessment for reading.	97.21%	N
	<b>99%</b> of students with disabilities in grades three through ten will participate in statewide assessment for math.	96.80%	N
	<b>47%</b> of students with disabilities in grades three through ten will demonstrate proficiency in reading.	31.63%	N
	<b>47%</b> of students with disabilities in grades three through ten will demonstrate proficiency in math.	29.33%	N
4. Rates of suspension and expulsion	<b>11%</b> of districts are identified by the state as having a significant discrepancy (a risk ratio of 3.0 or higher) in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of children with IEPs for greater than 10 days in 2012-13.	2.6	Y

**LEA Profile 2015**

Indicator	2013-14 State-Level Target	LEA Data	Target Met
	<b>0%</b> of districts are identified by the state as having both (a) a significant discrepancy (a risk ratio of 3.0 or higher) in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of children with IEPs by race or ethnicity for greater than 10 days and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards in 2012-13.		Y
5. FAPE in the LRE, children ages 6-21	Increase the percentage of students with IEPs age 6 to 21 years removed from regular class placement for less than 21% of the day to <b>74.0%</b> .	70.43%	N
	Decrease the percentage of student with IEPs age 6-21 years removed from regular class placement for greater than 60% of the day to <b>11.0%</b> .	21.67%	N
	Decrease the percentage of students with IEPs age 6 to 21 years served in public or private separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements to <b>2.25%</b> .	0.00%	Y
6. FAPE in the LRE, children ages 3-5	Increase the percentage of children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years served by Florida's public school districts in settings with typically developing peers to <b>28%</b> .	1.65%	N
	Decrease the percentage of children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years served by Florida's public school districts in a special education class, separate school or residential facility to <b>50.3%</b> .	97.25%	N
7. Prekindergarten Performance	<b>63.6%</b> of children who entered preschool below grade expectations will substantially increase their growth in positive social emotional skills by the time they exit the preschool program.	47.37%	N
	<b>63.9%</b> of children who entered preschool below grade expectations will substantially increase their growth in acquisition and use of knowledge and skills by the time they exit the preschool program.	57.69%	N
	<b>55.4%</b> of children who entered preschool below grade expectations will substantially increase their growth in use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs by the time they exit the PK program.	45.00%	N
	<b>82.4%</b> of children were functioning within age expectations in positive social emotional skills by the time they turn 6 years of age or exit the preschool program.	81.48%	N
	<b>68.9%</b> of children were functioning within age expectations in acquisition and use of knowledge and skills by the time they turn 6 years of age or exit the preschool program.	74.07%	Y
	<b>79.5%</b> of children were functioning within age expectations in use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs by the time they turn 6 years of age or exit the preschool program.	77.78%	N

Indicator	2013-14 State-Level Target	LEA Data	Target Met
8. Parent Involvement	75% of parents with a preschool child receiving special education services report that schools facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.	60.00%	N
	75% of parents with a child in K-12 receiving special education services report that schools facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.	74.68%	N
9. Disproportionate representation in special education	In 0% of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, the disproportionality can be attributed to inappropriate identification.		Y
10. Disproportionate representation in specific disability categories	In 0% of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, the disproportionality can be attributed to inappropriate identification.		Y
11. Evaluation within 60 days	100% of students referred, with parental consent, for evaluation are evaluated within 60 school days of which the student is in attendance.	99.42%	N
12. Part C Children eligible for Part B who have IEPs developed and implemented by their third birthday.	100% of children served and referred by part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday.	100.00%	Y
13. Transition IEP compliance	100% of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above have an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs.	0.00%	N
14. Postschool outcomes	29% of youth exiting in 2012-13 who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, were found enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.	18.75%	N
	42% of youth exiting in 2012-13 who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, were found in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.	37.50%	N
	54% of youth exiting in 2012-13 who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, were found enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.	52.50%	N

## **APPENDIX D: TARGET DISTRICT TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN**



## Transition Assistance Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_

### Desired Post School Outcomes

- 1) I plan to graduate from high school in \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) When I graduate from high school I plan to  
☐ Attend a university ☐ Attend a community college  
☐ Attend a vocational school ☐ Go directly to work
- 3) The summer after I graduate I plan to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) After graduation I Plan to live with (in) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Instruction/Academic Area**

- 5) The courses that I am most interested in taking \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6) The courses that I am not interested in taking \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Course modifications that help me to succeed include \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Skills I need to improve on are \_\_\_\_\_

### **Employment**

- 9) After high school graduation, I want to be employed as a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10) My career goal is \_\_\_\_\_

### **Post-School Adult Living**

- 11) Five years after high school graduation, I want to live:  
☐ independently ☐ assisted living  
☐ with my parents/relatives ☐ with friends

Copies to: Cumulative ESE Folder      Student      Parent      ESE Teacher

## Transition Assistance Plan (Page 2)

### Community Experience

- 12) My hobbies or leisure activities are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 13) I belong to the following clubs \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 14) Leisure activities that I would like to be able to do \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Daily Living

- 15) I will need the following skills to live as independently as possible \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Functional Vocational Evaluation

- 16) Vocational experiences that I liked \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 17) Vocational experiences that I didn't like \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 18) Vocational experiences that I would like to know more about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Summary

- 19) In summary, I need help with my post-secondary plans in the following ways  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 20) Other information that I need to share \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: Cumulative ESE Folder      Student      Parent      ESE Teacher

01

## APPENDIX E: TRANSITION SURVEY



## TRANSITION SURVEY

This survey is adapted from the survey used for Perceptions of Transition Barriers, Practices, and Solutions in Florida, by Joyce H. Lubbers, Jeanne B. Repetto and Susan P. McGorray.

Permission to use and to modify their survey is attached as Exhibit D of the IRB Submission.

The program Qualtrics was be used to administer the survey and evaluate survey data. Qualtrics allows the employment of skip logic, which was be employed during the administration of this survey.

Question 1 included the required informed consent information.

## **Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities Informed Consent**

Principal Investigator(s): C. Jenee' DeLaney

Faculty Supervisor: *Dr. Carolyn Hopp*

Investigational Site(s): *Columbia County School District  
Lake City, Florida 32025*

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 800 people in the North Florida area. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a member of the educational community. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Jenee DeLaney, a student in the Doctor of Education program at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student, she is being guided by *Dr. Carolyn Hopp* a UCF faculty member in the EdD program.

**What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate organizational factors contributing to Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to participate in an on-line survey designed to explore your perceptions about student attendance and truancy. You do not have to answer every question or complete every task.

**Location:**

- Surveys will be done anonymously, via the internet, using Qualtrics.

**Time required:**

- The internet surveys should take approximately 12 minutes.

**Compensation or payment:**

There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Anonymous research:** This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you gave came from you.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Dr. Carolyn Hopp, Faculty Supervisor in the College of Education at UCF (Email at [carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu](mailto:carolyn.hopp@ucf.edu)).

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following: Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team. You cannot reach the research team. ou want to get information or provide input about this research.

Please indicate your willingness to participate in the **Improving Post-Secondary Transition of Students with Disabilities survey**.

Yes, I voluntarily agree to participate in this survey

No, I do not agree to participate in this survey

Question 2:

Which best describes your duties?

Classroom Instructional

Support

Administrative

Question 3:

Which best describes your duties?

General Education

Special Education

Combination

Question 4:

What grade level applies to your current professional situation?

High school only

Middle school only

Elementary only

Combination High School/Middle School



Question 5:

What transition training have you received? Select all that apply.

Self-determination (including Dare to Dream, Self-directed IEP's, etc.)

Developing Quality Transition IEP's

Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCPs)

Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment (CBVA)

Supported Employment

Community Based Instruction

Interagency Collaboration

Dealing with Differences

Social Security Work Incentives

Diploma Options

Transfer of Rights

Facilitating Parent/Student Involvement

Other (please specify):

Question 6:

What transition training would you like to receive? Select all that apply.

Self-determination (including Dare to Dream, Self-directed IEP's, etc.)

Developing Quality Transition IEP's

Modified Occupational Completion Points (MOCPs)

Curriculum-Based Vocational Assessment (CBVA)

Supported Employment

Community Based Instruction

Interagency Collaboration

Dealing with Differences

Social Security Work Incentives

Diploma Options

Transfer of Rights

Facilitating Parent/Student Involvement

Other (please specify):

Question 7:

At your school, is time allocated to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?

Yes

No

Question 8:

Do you have enough time to teach transition skills to students with disabilities?

Yes

No

Question 9:

Are you teaching transition skills to students with disabilities?

Yes

No

Question 10:

At which grade level do you have the most experience?

Primary Grades Pre-K – 2nd

Elementary Grades 3rd – 5th

Middle Grades 6th – 8th

High School Grades 9th – 12th

Question 11 A:

How many years experience do you have with students at the Primary Grade Level?

3 years or less

4 - 14 years experience

15 years or more

Question 11 B:

How many years experience do you have with students at the Intermediate Grade Level?

3 years or less

4 - 14 years experience

15 years or more

Question 11 C:

How many years experience do you have with students at the Middle School Grade Level?

3 years or less

4 - 14 years experience

15 years or more

Question 11 D:

How many years experience do you have with students at the High School Grade Level?

3 years or less

4 - 14 years experience

15 years or more

Question 12: A

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced to students with disabilities at the Primary Grade Level?

celebrating success

embracing differences

self-efficacy skills

Disability Awareness

self-advocacy

introduce goal setting

introduce career exploration

Interest inventories

Aptitude exploration

Career exploration

Goal setting activities

IEP self-advocacy

Responsibilities

Disability rights

Transition planning

Goal attainment planning

Laws and use

Career paths

Other please list

Question 12: B

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input. Which of the following skills do you think should be introduced or taught to students with disabilities at the Intermediate Grade Level?

celebrating success

embracing differences

self-efficacy skills

Disability Awareness

self-advocacy

introduce goal setting

introduce career exploration

Interest inventories

Aptitude exploration

Career exploration

Goal setting activities

IEP self-advocacy

Responsibilities

Disability rights

Transition planning

Goal attainment planning

Laws and use

Career paths

Other please list

Question 12: C

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input. Which of the following skills do you think should be taught to students with disabilities at the Middle Grade Level?

celebrating success	Goal setting activities
embracing differences	IEP self-advocacy
self-efficacy skills	Responsibilities
Disability Awareness	Disability rights
self-advocacy	Transition planning
introduce goal setting	Goal attainment planning
introduce career exploration	Laws and use
Interest inventories	Career paths
Aptitude exploration	Other please list
Career exploration	<input type="text"/>



Question 12: D

Due to your level of experience, we would like your input. Which of the following skills do you think should be taught to students with disabilities at the High School Level?

celebrating success

embracing differences

self-efficacy skills

Disability Awareness

self-advocacy

introduce goal setting

introduce career exploration

Interest inventories

Aptitude exploration

Career exploration

Goal setting activities

IEP self-advocacy

Responsibilities

Disability rights

Transition planning

Goal attainment planning

Laws and use

Career paths

Other please list

Question 13:

What would help you implement teaching transition skills?

Question 14:

What barriers exist that hinder the transition process?

Question 15:

What suggestions do you have for improvement of the transition process?

Question 16:

What curricular supports would assist you in supporting student transition needs?

Question 17:

Would you be willing to participate in an interview via phone or in person if your identity is kept confidential?

Yes

No

Question 18:

If you have indicated that you are willing to participate in a confidential interview please provide your contact information in the space below.

Question 19:

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers have been recorded for research purposes and your identity is anonymous and not available to the researcher.

## REFERENCES

- Aleman, S. R. (1991). Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990, PL 101-476: A Summary. CRS Report for Congress.
- Amos Kendall. (2015, July 18). Retrieved from [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Amos\\_Kendall.aspx#1-1G2:3404703503-full](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Amos_Kendall.aspx#1-1G2:3404703503-full)
- Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. New York: Longman, 2001.
- Baer, R., McMahan, R., & Flexer, R. (2004). Standards-based transition planning: A guide for parents and professionals. Manual published by Kent State University.
- Baker, M., Sigmon, J., & Nugent, M. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2001). Truancy reduction: Keeping students in school (NCJ-188947 2001-09-00)
- Benz, M. R., & Halpern, A. S. (1987). Transition services for secondary students with mild disabilities: A statewide perspective. *Exceptional Children*, 53(6), 507-514.
- Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 509-529.
- Bixler, A. (2011). What we muggles can learn about teaching from Hogwarts. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 84(2), 75-79.
- Blackorby, J., & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study. *Exceptional children*, 62(5), 399-413.
- Bloom, B.S., M.D. Engelhart, E.J. Furst, W.H. Hill, and D.R. Krathwohl. 1956. Taxonomy of Educational objectives: The classification of educational goals; handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York: Longmans, Green.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership. (5th ed.). New York Cit, NY: Wiley and Sons. Retrieved from <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=xUgbAAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT12&dq=Reframing organizations&ots=Ucbtk>
- Blackorby, J., & Wagner, M. (1996). Longitudinal postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study. *Exceptional children*, 62(5), 399-413.

- Burke, A. (2009). Disproportionality of Suspensions: An Analysis of Special Education Services in Juvenile Court School (Doctoral dissertation, California State University Channel Islands).
- Burns, D. P. (2014). Re of Philosophy of Education: Introductory readings. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 22(1), 118.
- Bye, L., Alvarez, M., Haynes, J., & Sweigart, C. (2010). *Truancy prevention and intervention: A practical guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, L., & Campbell, B. (2008). *Mindful learning: 101 proven strategies for student and teacher success*. Corwin Press.
- The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate. (n.d.). Retrieved June 5, 2016, from <http://cpedinitiative.org/>
- Cast.org, UDL guidelines examples. (n.d.). Retrieved September 9, 2015, from <https://sites.google.com/site/udlguidelinesexamples/>
- Clark, R. E., & Estes, F. (2008). *Turning research into results: A guide to selecting the right performance solutions..* Altanta, Ga.: CEP Press.
- Cameto, R., & Levine, P. (2005). *Changes in the employment status and job characteristics of out-of-school youth with disabilities. Changes over time in the early postschool outcomes of youth with disabilities*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
- Conley, M., & Hinchman, K. (2004). No child left behind: What it means for u.s. adolescents and what we can do about it. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(4), 42-50. doi: 10.1598/JAAL.48.1.4
- Cross, T., Cooke, N. L., Wood, W. M., & Test, D. W. (1999). A comparison of the effects of MAPS and Choice Maker on student self-determination skills. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 34, 499–510.
- Department of Corrections Agency Statistics. (July, 2010). Retrieved from [http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0910/stats/ip\\_grade\\_level.html](http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/annual/0910/stats/ip_grade_level.html)
- Department of Corrections Mentoring Initiative. (July, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/oth/mentoring/>
- Duggan, C., & Byrne, M. (2013) *What Works in the Provision of Higher, Further and Continuing Education, Training and Rehabilitation for Adults with Disabilities?. National Council for Special Education*
- Dictionary, M. W. (2015). Merriam-webster online. Retrieved June, 7, 2015.

- Disability Rights Movement Timeline. (2015, July 18). Retrieved from [http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325\\_4064.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325_4064.html)
- 85-926 Education of Mentally Retarded Children Act of 1958, 20 U.S.C. § 611-617 (1958). Retrieved from [history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL85-926.pdf](http://history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL85-926.pdf)
- 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 (1975). Retrieved from [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-89/pdf/STATUTE-89-Pg773.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-89/pdf/STATUTE-89-Pg773.pdf)
- 99-457 Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (1986). Retrieved from [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-100/pdf/STATUTE-100-Pg145.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-100/pdf/STATUTE-100-Pg145.pdf)
- 101-379 Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1990, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (1990). Retrieved from <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-104/pdf/STATUTE-104-Pg1103.pdf>
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (n.d.) Famous Cases and Criminals. Retrieved from <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases>
- Ferguson, D. L. (2008). International trends in inclusive education: The continuing challenge to teach each one and everyone. *European Journal of special needs education*, 23(2), 109-120
- Field, S., & Hoffman, A. (1996). *Steps to self-determination: A curriculum to help adolescents learn to achieve their goals*. Austin: PRO-ED.
- Flexer, R., Baer, Robert M., Luft, P., and Simmons, T. (2013). *Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities* (4th edition). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Florida. (1861). Constitution of 1861 Constitution or form of government for the people of florida: as revised and amended at a Convention of the people begun and holden at the City of Tallahassee on the third day of January, A.D. 1861 : together with the Ordinances adopted by said convention. Tallahassee: Office of the Floridian and Journal . retrieved from <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010490944> , 07/16/2015
- Florida. (1865) Constitution of 1865: Constitution or form of government for the people of florida: as revised and amended at a Convention of the people begun and holden at the City of Tallahassee on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, A.D. 1865, together with the ordinances adopted by said convention. retrieved from <http://archive.law.fsu.edu/crc/conhist/1865con.html> , 07/16/2015



- Florida. (1868) Constitution of 1868: Constitution or form of government for the people of florida: as revised and amended at a Convention of the people begun and holden at the City of Tallahassee on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of February, A.D. 1868, together with the ordinances adopted by said convention. retrieved from <http://archive.law.fsu.edu/crc/conhist/1868con.html> , 07/16/2015
- Florida. (1885) Constitution of 1885: Constitution or form of government for the people of florida: as revised and amended at a Convention of the people begun and holden at the City of Tallahassee on the 3d day of August, A. D. 1865, together with the ordinances adopted by said convention. retrieved from <http://archive.law.fsu.edu/crc/conhist/1885con.html> , 07/16/2015
- Frenze, Christopher. (1996) The Reagan Tax Cuts: Lessons for Tax Reform. Retrieved From [http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/9576a929-37b4-497c-9b06-4bf3481f9f0a/the-reagan-tax-cuts-lessons-for-tax-reform-april-1996.pdf](http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/9576a929-37b4-497c-9b06-4bf3481f9f0a/the-reagan-tax-cuts-lessons-for-tax-reform-april-1996.pdf)
- Friend, M., & Bursuck, W. D. (2009). Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Gallaudet University. History of Gallaudet University. retrieved from <http://www.gallaudet.edu/history.html> , 07/16/2015
- Goode, D. A. (1990). Thinking about and discussing quality of life. *Quality of life: Perspectives and issues*, 41-57.
- Gregory, R., J. (2007). *Psychological Testing: History, Principles, and Applications. Psychological Testing and the Law*. 5th ed. )
- Gu, X., Chen, S., Zhu, W., & Lin, L. (2015). An intervention framework designed to develop the collaborative problem-solving skills of primary school students. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 63(1), 143-159.
- Halpern, A. S. (1985). Transition: A look at the foundations. *Exceptional Children*, 51(6), 479-486.
- Halpern, A. S. (1991). Transition: Old wine in new bottles. *Exceptional Children*, 58(3), 202-211.
- Halpern, A. S. (1993). Quality of life as a conceptual framework for evaluating transition outcomes. *Exceptional Children*, 59(6), 486-498.
- Halpern, A. S., Herr, C. M., Wolf, N. K., Lawson, J. D., Doren, B., & Johnson, M. D. (1997). *Next S.T.E.P. Austin: PRO-ED*.

- Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and Correctional Populations. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Heppen, J. B., & Therriault, S. B. (2008). Developing early warning systems to identify potential high school dropouts. Issue Brief. National High School Center.
- Heppen, J. B., & Therriault, S. B. (2008). Developing early warning systems to identify potential high school dropouts. Issue Brief. National High School Center.
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty. Sage Publications.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004
- History of Gallaudet University - Gallaudet University. (2015, June 16). Retrieved from <http://www.gallaudet.edu/history.html>
- Izzo, M. V., Yurick, A., Nagaraja, H. N., & Novak, J. A. (2010). Effects of a 21st-century curriculum on students' information technology and transition skills. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 33(2), 95-105.
- JFK and People with Intellectual Disabilities. (2015, July 18) Retrieved from <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/JFK-and-People-with-Intellectual-Disabilities.aspx>
- Johnson, J. A. (2009). Special education: Whose responsibility is it. *International Journal of Special Education*, 24(2), 11-18.
- Keith, J. M., & Mccray, A. D. (2002). Juvenile offenders with special needs: Critical issues and bleak outcomes. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(6), 691-710.
- Kessinger, T. A. (2011). Efforts toward educational reform in the United States since 1958: A re of seven major initiatives. *American Educational History Journal*, 38(1/2), 263.
- Kohler, P. D., DeStefano, L., Wermuth, T., Grayson, T., & McGinty, S. (1994). An analysis of exemplary transition programs: How and why are they selected? *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 17, 187-202.
- Kohler, P. D. (1998). Implementing a transition perspective of education: A comprehensive approach to planning and delivering secondary education and transition services. In F. R. Rusch & J. Chadsey (Eds.), *High school and beyond: Transition from school to work* (pp. 179-205). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

- Kumagami, T., & Kumagai, K. (2014). Measuring adjustment in Japanese juvenile delinquents with learning disabilities using Japanese version of Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children II. *Psychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 68(10), 768-775.
- 88-156 Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963. 42 U.S.C. § 701 (1963). Retrieved from [history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL88-156.pdf](http://history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL88-156.pdf)
- 88-164 Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act of 1963, 42 U.S.C. § 201 (1963). Retrieved from [www.history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL88-164.pdf](http://www.history.nih.gov/research/downloads/PL88-164.pdf)
- Lubbers, J. H., Repetto, J. B., & McGorray, S. P. (2008). Perceptions of transition barriers, practices, and solutions in Florida. *Remedial and Special Education*, 29(5), 280-292.
- Mallett, C. A. (2011). Seven things juvenile courts should know about learning disabilities.
- Marzano, R. (2011). The perils and promises of discovery learning! *Educational Leadership*, V:1, 86-87
- Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Gordon, D. (n.d.). *Universal Design for Learning Theory and Practice*. Retrieved September 10, 2015.
- Morris, K. A., & Morris, R. J. (2006). Disability and juvenile delinquency: Issues and trends. *Disability & Society*, 21(6), 613-627.
- National Center On Universal Design for Learning, What is Universal Design for Learning (n.d.). Retrieved September 9, 2015, from <http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl>
- Neil, A. K. (2010). A descriptive analysis with demographic and correlational data on incarcerated male youth and special education (Doctoral dissertation).
- Newman, L., Wagner, M., Huang, T., Shaver, D., Knokey, A. M., Yu, J., & Cameto, R. (2011). Secondary School Programs and Performance of Students with Disabilities: A Special Topic Report of Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSER 2012-3000. National Center for Special Education Research.
- Newman, L., Wagner, M., Cameto, R., & Knokey, A. M. (2009). The Post-High School Outcomes of Youth With Disabilities up to 4 Years After High School: A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). NCSER 2009-3017. National Center for Special Education Research.
- Northrop, L., & Killeen, E. (2013). A framework for using iPads to build early literacy skills. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(7), 531-537.

- Qualtrics Support. (n.d.) Retrieved July 1, 2016, from <https://www.qualtrics.com/support/surveyplatform/survey-module/survey-flow/standard-elements/branch-logic/>
- Quinn, M. M., Rutherford, R. B., Leone, P. E., Osher, D. M., & Poirier, J. M. (2005). Youth with disabilities in juvenile corrections: A national survey. *Exceptional children*, 71(3), 339-345.
- Rucklidge, J. J., McLean, A. P., & Bateup, P. (2013). Criminal Offending and Learning Disabilities in New Zealand Youth Does Reading Comprehension Predict Recidivism?. *Crime & Delinquency*, 59(8), 1263-1286.
- Rueda, R. (2011). *The 3 dimensions of improving student performance: Finding the right solutions to the right problems*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Rusch, F. R., Hughes, C., Agran, M., Martin, J. E., & Johnson, J. R. (2009). Toward self-directed learning, post-high school placement, and coordinated support constructing new transition bridges to adult life. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 32(1), 53-59.
- Rutherford, R. B., Bullis, M., Anderson, C. W., & Griller-Clark, H. M. (2002). Youth with disabilities in the correctional system: Prevalence rates and identification issues. Washington, DC: Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice.
- Salend, S. J., Garrick Duhaney, L. M., Rotatori, A. F., Obiakor, F. E., & Bakken, J. P. (2011). Historical and philosophical changes in the education of students with exceptionalities. *History of special education advances in education*, 21, 1-20.
- Shulman, L. (2006). Shulman: Balanced education teaches students habits of mind, hand, and heart. Retrieved from <http://php.louisville.edu/news/news.php?news=591>
- Selenius, H., Hellström, Å., & Belfrage, H. (2011). Aggression and risk of future violence in forensic psychiatric patients with and without dyslexia. *Dyslexia*, 17(2), 201-206.
- Seo, Y., Abbott, R. D., & Hawkins, J. D. (2008). Outcome status of students with learning disabilities at ages 21 and 24. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 41(4), 300-314.
- Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*.
- United Nations, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) retrieved from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> , retrieved 07/02/2015

- United Nations, Map No. 4496 Rev. 5 United Nations July 2015 retrieved from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/maps/enablemap.jpg> , 07/16/2015
- United States Census (2010) <http://dataferrett.census.gov/> 06/04/2015
- U. S. Department of Commerce, U. S. Census Bureau. (2014). Columbia County, Florida. Retrieved from website: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12023.html>
- Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., & Levine, P. (2005). Changes over Time in the Early Postschool Outcomes of Youth with Disabilities. A Report of Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). Online Submission.
- Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Levine, P., & Marder, C. (2003). Going to school: Instructional contexts, programs, and participation of secondary school students with disabilities. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
- Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., Garza, N., & Levine, P. (2005). After high school: A first look at the postschool experiences of youth with disabilities. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). Online Submission.
- Wandry, D. L., Webb, K. W., Williams, J. M., Bassett, D. S., Asselin, S. B., & Hutchinson, S. R. (2008). Teacher candidates' perceptions of barriers to effective transition programming. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 31(1), 14-25.
- Ward, M. J., & Kohler, P. D. (1996). Promoting self-determination for individuals with disabilities: Content and process. In L. E. Powers, G. H. S. Singer, & J. Sowers (Eds.), *On the road to autonomy: Promoting selfcompetence in children and youth with disabilities* (pp. 275–290). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Whitaker, A. (2011). Reducing the risk among the most at-risk: Determining what contributes to African-American males in special education having the highest rates of incarceration and academic failure (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California).
- White, N. A., & Loeber, R. (2008). Bullying and special education as predictors of serious delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*.
- Will, M. (1984). Bridges from school to working life. Department of Education; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. *Interchange*, 1984, 20(5), 2-6.
- Wolfensberger, W. (1970). The principle of normalization and its implications to psychiatric When services. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 127(3), 291-297.
- Woods, B. (2009). *The Right to Think: Giving Adolescents the Skills to Make Sense of the World*.

Xiang, L., & Passmore, C. (2015). A framework for model-based inquiry through agent-based programming. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 24(2-3), 311-329.